JERRY,
The Backwoods Boy

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

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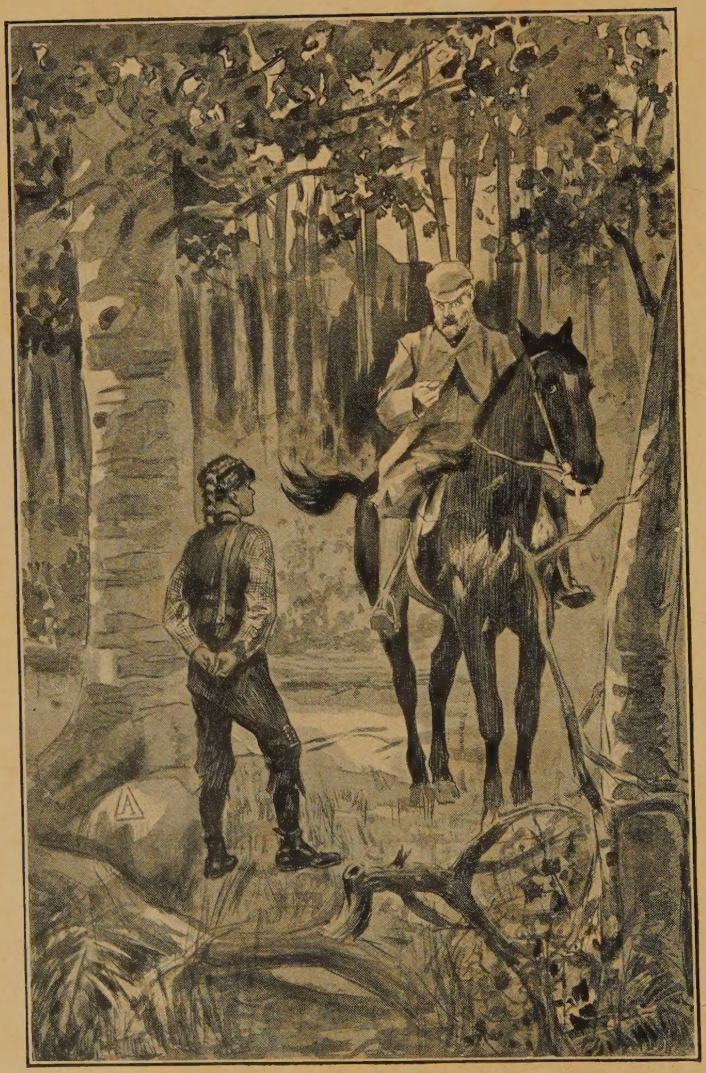

"I—I CAN'T TAKE IT, SIR."—P. 8.

JERRY, THE BACKWOODS BOY

OR

THE PARKHURST TREASURE

BY

HORATIO ALGER, Jr.

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG CAPTAIN JACK," "NELSON, THE NEWSBOY," "OUT FOR BUSINESS," "LOST AT SEA," "RAGGED DICK SERIES," ETC.

THE MERSHON COMPANY

RAHWAY, N. J. NEW YORK

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PREFACE

"JERRY, THE BACKWOODS BOY" depicts life on a farm in New York State many years ago, when large portions of what are now highly cultivated farms were little better than trackless wilds, and when even the Indian was a close neighbor to the settlers.

Jerry is not a hero in the usual definition of that term. He is merely a bright boy, full of wit and humor. He loves outdoor life and good times. Only one thing worries him, and that is the mystery surrounding his parentage, and when this is cleared away he is correspondingly happy.

A large part of this story deals with the loss of a portion of the Parkhurst treasure, and the efforts of a rascally lawyer to get this money in his own hands and keep it. What Jerry did toward restoring the treasure to its proper owner the pages that follow will reveal.

This story is one of the few left by the late Mr. Alger at the time of his death. It was completed by him some years before he passed away, but, strange to say, was never put into print, even as a serial. The tale shows the gifted writer, who has

pleased millions of boys and girls with his fascinating stories, at his best, and the one wish of the present editor is that it will meet with the success that it richly deserves.

In presenting this story to young readers it is interesting to note that during the past thirty years over three million copies of Mr. Alger's books have been sold. The books sell not alone in this country, but also in Canada, England, Australia, and even in South Africa. Each tale is of a high moral tone, and the good done by this writer is incalculable.

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JERRY, THE BACKWOODS BOY

CHAPTER I

A TRAVELER IN TROUBLE

"I WISH I knew where that old red cow had gone to."

The speaker was a tall, bright-looking youth of fourteen, dressed in a plain suit of homespun, a battered coonskin cap, and shoes that told of hard wear. He stood on a rocky cliff that overlooked a tangle of grass and brushwood, skirted by a tall forest.

"I told Hitty that cow would get away if she gave her half a chance," went on the boy to himself, as his eyes searched the brushwood and the row of trees that was nearest to him. "And she wouldn't even tie the bell on her. It's a pity she didn't have to go after the cow herself."

Not a trace of the missing cow was to be seen anywhere, and with something of a sigh Jerry Blue leaped down from the rocky cliff and started for the patch of timber just mentioned.

The time was many years ago, when the west-

ern portion of New York State was little better than a wilderness, and when even the city of Buffalo, now a place of three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, boasted of only a few hundred souls. The spot was in the heart of this wilderness, several miles from where a few settlers had made their homes, and where a tavern erected at a crossroad gave these people a place where they might meet occasionally and gossip.

The boy after the red cow had left his home two hours before to look for the missing beast. The cow, though old, was the best milker on Squire Parkhurst's place, and Jerry knew that it would never do to lose the animal altogether.

"If I can't find her, I know the squire will blame me sure," he told himself dismally. "Hitty won't take any of the blame, that's sure. An old maid like her never thinks she's in the wrong. And what will Miss Mabel say, after my promising to keep everything in apple-pie order only yesterday?"

As Jerry drew closer to the trees, a squirrel sitting on a bush attracted his attention. He picked up a sharp stone, took careful aim, and let fly. But the squirrel was too quick for the boy and dodged out of sight in safety.

"Another miss," grumbled Jerry. "No two ways about it, everything is going wrong to-day. First, I broke the water pitcher, and then I fell

on the woodhouse step and barked my shin, and now it seems as if I'd never find that cow. Wish I was rich and didn't have to work for a living."

Having reached the timber, Jerry looked around in the fallen leaves and on the damp ground for some trace of the missing animal. He knew that the cows sometimes wandered off in that direction. Presently he saw hoof prints that appeared familiar to him.

"That's what I'm after!" he cried, his face brightening a little. "Now, Suky, I'll have you pretty quick, and I'll give you a good one for running away from me, mind that!"

He set off at a faster pace than before and in less than ten minutes reached a well-defined path running through the woods. Here the marks left by the cow showed that she had crossed the path and gone into the timber beyond.

Jerry was about to follow still further when an odd sound from up the trail caused him to halt. Some animal was running toward him, and now he made out a human voice:

"Stop, Nero! stop, I tell you! Whoa, or you'll kill me! Whoa!"

"Something is wrong," murmured Jerry and gazed anxiously along the trail.

Suddenly a horse, saddled and bridled, burst into view, galloping along at a high rate of speed. From one stirrup dragged the form of a horse-

man, who was trying in vain to halt the runaway animal and pull himself up to the saddle seat.

Jerry was astonished and for the instant it must be confessed that he was likewise frightened. But he did not lose his wits, and as the horse came closer he made a leap to stop the steed.

His grasp for the bridle was successful, and once having got hold he clung fast like grim death.

"That's right, stop him!" gasped the unfortunate man who was caught in the stirrup. "Don't let him get away from you!"

Jerry did not answer, for he did not want to lose his breath. The horse jerked this way and that and took several more steps forward. But then the steed gradually quieted down and finally came to a standstill.

With the animal standing at rest, it was an easy matter for the horseman to extricate himself from his difficulty, and this he did as speedily as possible. He was a kindly-looking gentleman of forty-five or fifty, with iron-gray hair and beard.

"Young man, I owe you one for your bravery," said he, as he took the horse from Jerry's care and tied him to a tree.

"Oh, that's all right, sir; you are welcome," said the boy, and touched his coonskin cap.

"I believe you saved me from death," went on

the gentleman, as he started to brush himself off and rearrange his disordered garments.

"Maybe not that, sir; but I guess I saved you from a jolly good thumping on the rocks," answered Jerry.

"It was a gallant thing to do, and I am very grateful to you for it. May I ask your name?"

"My name is Jerry Blue, sir."

"Do you live near here?"

"I live with Squire Parkhurst. I am his bound boy."

"Oh, I see. I have never met the squire, but I have heard of him as being a very good man."

"He is a first-class gentleman, sir."

"So you are his bound boy. Are your parents living?"

At this query Jerry's eyes dropped.

"I can't answer that question, sir."

"Can't answer it?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know."

"Oh! Well—ahem—I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, my boy."

"Oh, it's all right. 'Most everybody that knows me knows about that."

"Your words make me a bit curious to know something of your history," went on the gentleman, giving a final brush to his coat.

"There isn't a great deal about the story, sir. Squire Parkhurst took me out of a poorhouse in New York City. He has only himself and his daughter Mabel, and he wanted a boy around, to do chores and like that."

"Is Blue your true name? It is certainly very uncommon."

"No, Blue isn't my right name. You see I was left at the poorhouse one dark night. Somebody left me on the porch, wrapped up in a blue overcoat. Pinned to the overcoat was a slip of paper which read: 'Please be good to Jeremiah, and some day I may be able to reward you.' So because of that note and the blue overcoat they called me Jerry Blue."

"I see. And they never found out anything concerning your parentage?"

"No, sir. You see they took it that my folks must be too poor to support me, so I guess they didn't try very hard."

"And how long did you remain at the poorhouse?"

"I don't know exactly. Once a man named Cass took me away for a couple of years, but he was hurt in an explosion and I had to go back. Then Squire Parkhurst visited the place with his daughter Mabel, and Mabel picked me out right away, and so I came away out here with them."

" Certainly an odd story, Jerry. I presume you do not know me."

" No, sir—never saw you before."

" My name is Henry Maxwell, and I am in the wholesale provision business in New York, with a branch house in Boston. I have been journeying out here on some business connection with my wife's father's estate. My business was finished up yesterday, and I am getting back to New York as fast as I can make the trip."

" I hope you are not afraid of your horse, Mr. Maxwell. He seems gentle enough."

" I am not in the least afraid. It was my own fault that I fell. I rode him too close to some trees, and a low branch swept me to the ground and my boot became entangled in the stirrup, as you saw. I had been dragged only a short distance when you came to my aid. I feel I ought to reward you, Jerry."

So speaking, the gentleman brought forth a gold piece from his purse and handed it out toward the boy.

CHAPTER II

JERRY MAKES A FRIEND

In those days gold was as much in evidence as banknotes, but both were strangers to Jerry's eyes and he stared in astonishment at the shining piece in the open palm.

"Why, it's—it's gold!" he gasped.

"To be sure," laughed Mr. Maxwell. "Did you expect that I would offer you lead?"

"I—I can't take it, sir."

"Why not?"

"It's too much. Why, I never had a gold piece in my life," declared Jerry, and with perfect truth.

"All the more reason, my lad, that you should have one now. You have done me a great service. What I am giving you in return is small in comparison. But I am nearly out of ready funds and what I have left must be used on my journey back to New York."

"I don't want to rob you."

"Let me be the judge as to whether you are robbing me or not."

"If some folks saw me with a gold piece, they'd say I had been robbing somebody."

"Would Squire Parkhurst say so? Or his daughter?"

"Oh, no, sir, I think not. No matter what I do, Miss Mabel knows that I always tell her the truth."

"I will make the matter plain," said Mr. Maxwell and drew out a blank book from his pocket. On a page he wrote the following:

"This is to certify that Jerry Blue saved me from a great peril, and for his bravery I have given him the piece of gold he now carries.

"HENRY MAXWELL."

"There, how will that do, Jerry?" and the gentleman handed over the paper.

"That's very nice," said the boy, after spelling out the words. "But are you sure you can spare the money?"

"Yes."

"Then I thank you very much for it."

"If you ever come to New York, you must call upon me," continued Henry Maxwell. "Here, I will put my address on the back of that sheet," and he did so.

"Thank you, I will. But I don't expect to get to New York very soon. It's a long journey, and a man who came in last week said the roads were about as bad as they were four years ago."

"The roads are certainly bad enough. To run

a stage all the way through would be utterly impossible. But you think you will come to New York some time?"

"Yes, sir. I am coming down just as soon as I am my own master."

"To see if you cannot clear up the mystery of your identity?"

"That's it."

"I must say I cannot blame you for that. For all you know your parents may be rich instead of poor, although it is best not to raise false hopes."

"I don't care if they are rich or poor, so long as I can find them. I have a pretty good home with the squire, but I get to feeling mighty lonely sometimes."

"That is natural—everybody craves the nearness of his own flesh and blood at times. I know, when I was a boy of twelve, I went away on a trip to Philadelphia for two months. I visited some friends who were very dear to me. But with it all I got very homesick, and when my visit came to an end I was more than glad to see my father and mother and my sisters again."

"I wish I was certain that my father and mother were alive," said Jerry. "And I'd like to know if I have any brothers or sisters."

"When I get back to New York I will look into the matter for you," returned Mr. Maxwell. "I have some friends who are interested in public

affairs, and they may be able to stir up some old records to your advantage, or get hold of some sort of clew regarding your parentage."

"If you'll do that, I'll be ever so thankful!" cried the boy quickly. He held out the gold piece. "You can have that back, too."

"No, my lad, keep the money. I shall certainly do all I can for you. And now I must go."

Mr. Maxwell shook hands and leaped lightly into the saddle.

"Good-by, Jerry, and let me thank you again for your service to me."

"Good-by, Mr. Maxwell. You are welcome, sir. Please don't forget about me when you get to New York."

"I shall not forget, never fear. Good-by," and in a moment more horse and rider had passed out of sight around a bend in the forest road.

For fully a minute Jerry stood in the open, gazing at the spot where the gentleman had vanished. Then he drew a long sigh.

"Wonder if I'll ever see him again, or hear from him?" he mused. "He appeared to be such a nice man. And by the way he was dressed he must be rich. I wish he would find out something about me and send me word." He felt the gold piece and looked at it closely. "A real gold piece and no mistake! Wonder what Hitty will say to that? Guess I had better not tell her

about it, or she'll want me to give it to her, or Miss Mabel, or the squire, for safe keeping."

Speaking of the past had put Jerry in a thoughtful mood, and it was with a slow step that he took up the search for the missing red cow once again. He put the gold piece in his pocket and touched it every minute or so to make sure that it was safe. He felt rich, for never in his life had he possessed so much money as was his own now.

"Perhaps I can get a gun with that money some day," he thought. "And if I have a gun of my own, and powder and shot, I can go hunting when I please."

The trail of the missing cow was now a plain one and a little later Jerry discovered the animal, grazing contentedly in an opening to his right.

"Hullo, Suky, so there you are!" he cried, striding up. "A nice chase you have given me. Do you know what I ought to do? I ought to whip you good."

For reply the cow lifted her head and gazed at the boy contentedly, chewing her cud in the meantime. Jerry had not the heart to strike her, and merely turned her and started her for home.

"You've got to travel pretty fast," he said. "There's a storm coming, although there's no telling if it will come this afternoon or to-night. But I'm not going to be caught out in it, if I can

help it. So move along, or I'll cut a switch that you won't like." And then he clapped his hands and Suky increased her speed.

As Jerry had said, he was a poorhouse boy and nothing was known regarding him, further than what he had told Mr. Maxwell. Squire Parkhurst had tried to learn something concerning the waif, and so had the squire's daughter Mabel, but both had failed. The blue overcoat and the slip of paper that had been pinned to it were in the squire's possession, but they failed to disclose any clew worth following up.

As Jerry drove the red cow homeward he thought over the past so far as he could remember it. Times had been exceedingly hard for him previous to the coming upon the scene of Squire Parkhurst and Miss Mabel. He had received more blows than kisses, and the poorhouse fare, and meals with Dan Cass, had been far from satisfying. Becoming a member of the Parkhurst household had pleased him greatly, but now he was reaching out for something—he wanted to know all about himself, who he was and where he really belonged in this great world.

"I'll find out some day!" he cried, clenching his fists. But he did not know when that day was to be, nor did he dream of the odd things that were to happen to him before the secret of his identity was revealed.

CHAPTER III

NIGHT IN THE WOODS

NIGHT was rapidly settling down upon the landscape, and Jerry had long since gotten home with the red cow, when a horseman might have been seen leading his horse with an air of anxiety along the bridle path several miles to the southward of where the boy had met Henry Maxwell.

The traveler was a man not over thirty-three or thirty-four years of age, stout, and with square-shaped shoulders. He had a round, bullet-shaped head and ferret-like eyes, which, taken in connection with a spreading pug nose and a mottled complexion, could scarcely be said to make an attractive countenance, even under the most favorable circumstances.

"A pretty prospect," grumbled the traveler. "Here am I with nothing to eat since early this morning, wandering at random in this accursed wilderness with no chance that I can see of a resting-place. Serves me right for coming out here on what may, after all, prove a wild-goose chase. And yet,"—he added more thoughtfully —"if I only succeed in my plans, I will not

grudge the trouble I have taken. And I shall succeed, I feel sure. There's nothing that Dick Clarke has set himself to accomplish yet that he has failed in. Hark! what is that?"

As he spoke the dull rumbling of distant thunder came to his ears, and instantly the rain in thick drops began to patter down among the forest leaves.

"There's something more to be thankful for," muttered the traveler with increased peevishness. "It seems as if all the powers of nature were conspiring against me. But if I were only sure of a shelter and a little to stay my stomach, I wouldn't mind. A warm heart and a good conscience I've heard spoken of as good companions, but for my part give me a warm fire and a good stomachful, and I'll be content."

Meanwhile the darkness had rapidly increased, making the task of guiding the horse more difficult than before. Add to this that the beast was terrified by the storm and lightning, and half disposed to break away from his guide, and we have a complication of troubles which Dick Clarke was scarcely Christian enough to endure without grumbling.

As he strode on with hesitating steps a foot or two in advance of the horse, which he led by the bridle, he suddenly felt that he had stepped upon a soft substance, the nature of which very speedily

made itself manifest by the springing up of a tall Indian in his path.

"Ha! what have we here?" exclaimed Dick, startled. "My good friend, you appear to have singular taste in selecting such a time and such a place for repose."

"All places alike to Indian John," was the moody reply.

"Well, they are not to me by a great sight. I can think of a good many that I should prefer. Can you direct me to any place where I can obtain shelter for the night and something to eat?"

"No—none near," was the reply, and the Indian seemed ready to lie down again, when Dick, feeling that, if this resource failed him, he should be compelled to remain all night exposed to the inclemency of the weather, said more urgently:

"Think a little, my good friend. I know you can call to mind some place, however poor, where I may at least be sheltered from this accursed rain. Perhaps this will help your recollection."

As he said these last words he held up a coin which, in spite of the darkness, the Indian could see.

The bait took, for the red man snatched it from his hand, and before the traveler, startled by the suddenness of the proceeding, had decided whether to construe it into an acceptance of his offer, or as an act of pillage, the Indian decided

the matter by taking a step forward, and saying sententiously, "We lead, you follow," and marched steadily onward, showing, by his freedom from uncertainty, not only that he was accustomed to the place, but that his sight was keener than that of his companion.

Those are most likely to indulge in suspicions of their fellow-men who are least worthy of trust themselves, and Dick Clarke, many parts of whose life would scarcely have borne a very rigid examination, could not help feeling some doubts as to the good intentions of his savage guide.

"Who knows where the fellow is leading me?" thought he. "I may have got myself into a worse scrape even than staying out all night exposed to this pouring rain. I couldn't see the fellow's face very distinctly, but he looked rather sullen. And then the way he grabbed the money was a little suspicious. He may be luring me to some place where he can murder me for what money I may have about me, though for that matter I must confess he need not choose a darker or more convenient spot than that where we met. However, it may be as well for me to keep a sharp lookout." So saying, or rather thinking, Dick felt carefully to see that his pistols were ready to use at a moment's notice, in case the Indian should see fit to act on the offensive.

"I own," soliloquized Dick, as he was much in

the habit of doing, " that I should not like to have my scalp dangling from yonder fellow's waist. It's a kind of death that would have more terrors for me than any on the battle-field. However, I see we are getting to where the trees are not quite so thick, and I can see a little better."

In fact the Indian had guided him by a winding path to the skirt of the wood, where, although he was more exposed to the force of the storm, it seemed at all events less dismal than in the forest.

Dick Clarke began to feel greater confidence than at first in the fidelity of his guide, and pressed forward to the side of the latter, who was striding before him at a distance of perhaps a rod.

" Where are you going to carry me? " he inquired, looking about him in vain for light of some kind which should indicate a house.

" To tavern," answered the Indian with laconic brevity.

" Tavern? Indeed, I am glad to find that they have any institutions that remind one of civilization. To my mind this is about the wildest country I ever visited. I don't see how anybody can be contented to live hereabouts."

The Indian talked English but little, but could understand better than he could make use of it. At all events it was probable he comprehended the not over complimentary remarks upon his

neighborhood from the pointed nature of his reply.

"Why come here then?" he asked significantly.

"Oh, as to that," said the other, after a moment's pause, "we sometimes have to go where we would rather not. I shouldn't have come here if I hadn't had something to bring me here, you may be sure of that. However, be that as it may, I'm here, and I feel a little interest about knowing when I am likely to find shelter. How far off is this tavern that you propose to guide me to?"

"About three mile," said the Indian, as indifferently as if he had not got the distance to traverse as well as his companion.

"Three miles!" exclaimed Dick in dismay. "Well, that's what I call a very pleasant piece of information under the circumstances. It's only to be hoped that when I get there I shall be repaid for the trouble I have taken in traveling to it. But as we have got into a comparatively open path, I might as well mount old Sorrel here, who I am inclined to think will be as glad to find shelter as I am."

The rest of the journey passed in silence. The Indian was reticent by nature, and Dick Clarke was occupied by thoughts of his own.

CHAPTER IV

HILL'S TAVERN

PROBABLY neither the Indian nor his companion was sorry to come in sight of the building which was known for twenty miles around as Hill's Tavern.

It was not a large building, and the accommodations which it could offer travelers must have been very limited. But its chief business was not providing lodgings. Travelers were too few in number to make that a very important item. The bar was decidedly the leading feature of the establishment, and the amount of liquor consumed in the rude bar-room would have appalled an advocate of temperance. It was not unusual, when the evenings were pleasant, to find a majority of the settlers living within five miles gathered in the bar-room alternately drinking and gossiping. Nor was the patronage confined to the whites. Here, as elsewhere, one of the earliest lessons in civilization for which the Indians were indebted to their white brethren was the taste for rum, or "firewater" as they not inappropriately designated it, and a large share of the

proceeds of Indian industry—whenever they could be induced to work—went for intoxicating drinks.

On this particular evening the fury of the elements had prevented the usual collection in the bar-room. The landlord had not opened the door for a single customer through the evening, and he had about decided to close for the night when a knock was heard at the door.

Pricking up his ears with professional eagerness the portly landlord, who rejoiced in the military designation of Captain Hill, hastened to the door which he had already fastened, and withdrawing the bolt, looked out to see who his late guests might be.

At first he only caught sight of the Indian, who was generally known in the settlement as Indian John, or Jack. With a feeling of disappointment, for the Indian's patronage would hardly be sufficient to make it worth while to forego his purpose, he said: "You're too late, Jack. I am just going to close."

"Hallo there, landlord!" exclaimed Dick Clarke, coming forward in some alarm lest he should after all be deprived of the shelter which had cost him so much trouble to reach. "Is it the custom in your neighborhood to shut your doors upon guests that reach you no later than nine o'clock, and in such a storm too? If it is, I

must say it is the most inhospitable region I ever came into, that's all."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the landlord with deference. "I didn't see you. I thought it was only Jack here, and I knew he might have come in the daytime for the glass of liquor which I suppose is all that he is after."

"I must do Jack, if that is his name, the justice to say that he would never have thought of coming at all, if I had not tried the effect of a little silver upon him. But being here, I suppose he would not object to a little something hot to make him forget the wet and cold now, which he as well as myself is suffering."

The Indian, who had been standing by in seeming apathy, seemed to understand the meaning of what had been said, for his eye brightened with eagerness, and he ejaculated eagerly:

"Yes—yes. Me like rum."

"No doubt about that," commented the landlord, adding, "Don't you think you'd feel better for taking a little yourself, sir?"

"Faith, it's not a bad proposition. I think I'll accept it," said the traveler, throwing off his dripping overcoat, and taking a seat near the fireplace in which a large back-log was burning brightly. "I begin to think better of your country, landlord, than I was disposed to do a couple of hours since."

"It's a pleasant country, sir,—fine soil."

"I dare say," returned his guest carelessly, "but you'll admit that my reception until now has not been of a nature to make my first impressions very pleasant."

"Then you've never been this way before?" said the landlord, indulging a curiosity for which his fraternity is somewhat noted.

"Never in my life before. I didn't know the settlements extended out so far."

"You come mayhap from the city of New York?" suggested the landlord in an inquiring tone.

"Mayhap I do," was the not very decisive reply. "At any rate I have been there. It is quite a promising place; a good deal of business done there."

"So I have always heard," returned the landlord. "But after all I don't like being cooped up in a city. Give me the country, where I can have plenty of elbow room. However, I might feel differently if I were in a good business in the city. Perhaps you are so engaged, Mr.—ahem, your name escaped me."

"I don't remember having mentioned it," said Clarke, with a little malicious enjoyment in disappointing the landlord's evident desire to find out who he was.

"Ah, indeed, perhaps not," said the portly host,

not abashed. "I only thought it would be convenient to know what to call you. I'm thankful to say that I am not one of those landlords that are constantly prying into the business of their guests and all about them. Are you intending to stay long in this part of the country, sir?"

The inconsistency between the first and the last parts of the landlord's remarks brought a smile to the face of Dick Clarke, who, however, saw fit to cease quizzing his host and communicate at once all that he was intending to do.

"You may call me Clarke," he said. "As to my stay, that will be guided entirely by circumstances. For an idler like myself I don't know but I may be as well off here as anywhere."

"He is not in business," inferred the landlord. "I dare say he is looking about with the intention of settling down here. I hope he will. He looks like a young man of some means, and would no doubt contrive to spend a part of it with me. The larger the settlement, the better my chances of growing rich."

"I trust you will favor my house with your presence as long as you see fit to remain," he said obsequiously.

"I dare say I shall," said Clarke carelessly. "By the way, how long have you been located here?"

"It is four years since I first set up this tavern,

called after me, as you see. At that time there were fewer people in the settlement than now, and my customers were few, but more families have come in since, and I am doing pretty well now."

Meanwhile Dick Clarke drew off his boots and proceeded to dry his wet feet at the fire. Leaning luxuriously back in the rocking chair which he occupied, he turned towards the landlord, and asked with the air of one not much interested, but who only asked for the sake of keeping up the conversation: "Pray tell me who are some of your chief settlers? It is just possible that I may have met or heard of some of them before."

The landlord, nothing loath to gossip with his guest, commenced: "There's Isaac Davenport; Major Davenport, most people call him. I believe he was an officer in the war. He's about the earliest of our settlers, and owns a large tract of land. A fine man the Major is."

"Any family?" queried Dick Clarke, half closing his eyes.

"Yes, he's got a son; nigh on to twenty-two he must be now. Henry, the Major's only son, he's taken a good deal of pains with him—sent him off to the East to be educated. Let me see, there's a college at Cambridge, isn't there?"

"Yes, Harvard College."

"That's the place. Well, the young man got

his schooling there, and a fine scholar he was—at the head of his class, I've heard. But he's been back here now about a year and a half. Some say he brought home a lot of law books, and is studying law at home, but I don't know for certain about that."

"Who else have you among your principal men?" asked the guest, who apparently took less interest in young Davenport than the narrator.

"There's Squire Parkhurst——"

The traveler started. "What is his first name—his Christian name, I mean?"

"Joseph, I believe. Do you know him?"

"Probably not, although I have known a man of that name. But go on, tell me something of this man."

"I don't know very much to tell," answered the landlord. "He lives about five miles from here in a lonely place, and keeps himself very much to himself, which I think is a pity, not so much on his account, but it must be dull for his daughter, who is as pretty a damsel of eighteen summers as you will be likely to see anywhere about."

"Ah, he has a pretty daughter, then, has he?" said Clarke, veiling under an indifferent manner a stronger feeling of curiosity than he had yet felt.

"That he has, and I rather think there's a certain young gentleman has found it out."

"Ha, has she a suitor?" demanded the traveler

with a visible air of chagrin, which was somewhat surprising in one who professed to have heard of her for the first time only the moment before.

The landlord, however, was somewhat obtuse, and noticed nothing remarkable in the tone of his guest.

"It's that same young man that I was just telling you about," he continued, "Major Davenport's son Henry. I oftentimes see them walking or riding together, and I guess Major Davenport's is the only house where Squire Parkhurst goes. As I told you only a minute or two since, he isn't inclined to be very social, and keeps himself pretty much to himself."

"Does Mabel Parkhurst, think you, encourage the attentions of this young man?"

One point, however, his caution had overlooked. He had unwittingly used the young lady's Christian name. The landlord did not fail to notice this slip, and asked with an air of surprise, "You know her, then?"

"From what do you infer that?" inquired Clarke unsuspiciously.

"How should you have known that her name was Mabel Parkhurst, otherwise?"

"From your mentioning it, of course, landlord," said Dick Clarke with unblushing assurance. "How else should I know it?"

"I suppose I did name it, then," said the land-

lord, overborne by the other's confident declaration, "although I don't remember it."

"However, though I don't know her now," continued Clarke, "your representations have so stimulated my curiosity that I shall certainly take the earliest opportunity of making her acquaintance; that is, if I remain here long enough."

"They ain't so come-at-able as some," said the landlord dubiously.

"All things are possible to the daring," said Dick with a careless laugh. "Perhaps I may yet cut out this college stripling of yours."

"He is a good-looking fellow," said the landlord, who had been won by the young man's frank and affable bearing to take quite a strong interest in his success. As he said this, it was only natural that he should cast a glance at the not over prepossessing countenance of his guest.

Dick Clarke penetrated the landlord's meaning with no great difficulty, but it was not one of his foibles to be sensitive on the score of his personal appearance. Accordingly he said, in a good-humored way:

"And you mean to intimate, friend landlord, that in that respect he has the decided advantage of me."

"I don't deny, sir," said the landlord hastily, not wishing to offend his guest, "that you are a very good-looking man of your years."

Dick Clarke smilingly surveyed his host's proportions and replied: "Perhaps they don't regard personal appearance so much as you think, my good friend. It isn't all that can sound a woman's heart, or read her preferences. However, it isn't worth while to spend too much time upon a girl I have not seen and may not like. I may be very willing to leave her to this young Davenport after all. But I see by your clock in the corner that it is getting late, at any rate for one who has been on a horse's back pretty much all day. I suppose you can furnish me with a comfortable chamber?"

"Yes, sir. I can give you a good comfortable room, where I have no doubt you will sleep as sound as a top. But perhaps you will take another glass to serve as a night-cap. It's a sovereign thing to give one a good night's rest."

"I don't care if I do," was the reply, "provided you will join me in it."

"That I will with great pleasure," said Captain Hill with a heartiness which left no doubt of his sincerity. "I'll drink your health in a bumper."

"And success to my suit, eh, landlord?"

"Yes, provided you don't trespass on another's manor."

"That qualification spoils all. But here's one I warrant will drink without any such qualifica-

tions. Do you think you can stand another glass, Jack?"

The Indian came forward from the settee on which he was reclining and expressed his eager assent.

"Jack is always on hand," said the landlord. "If he keeps on drinking at this rate, he'll lose half his name and become a demijohn."

The landlord laughed obstreperously at his own witticism, which so far put him in good humor that he gave Indian John permission to spend the night on the settee which he had already occupied.

CHAPTER V

SQUIRE PARKHURST'S HOUSEHOLD

PRESUMING that the reader may feel desirous of knowing more of the Parkhursts, in whom Dick Clarke appears to take so mysterious an interest, we propose to change the scene from the rude tavern to the dwelling of Squire Parkhurst. It may be mentioned by the way that the title "Squire" was a title of courtesy only, being conferred out of deference to the supposed wealth of the bearer.

The site of the dwelling was well chosen. It crowned the summit of an elevation sloping gradually to a beautiful pond, which, though not large in extent, was of considerable depth. Except on the side that looked towards the house the banks were adorned with sightly trees, some throwing their branches far out over the placid water, and so furnishing a refreshing shelter from the fervor of the summer sun. Mabel Parkhurst often floated in a boat kept for her use upon the pond under the shadow of these fine old trees, sometimes in company with Henry Davenport, who was always ready to proffer his assistance.

Contrary to the usual custom (for the pioneer is not often a man who has an appreciation of the tasteful and beautiful) a few trees had been left standing in the neighborhood of the house, so that its first appearance, when seen through the leaves of the stately trees which stood before it, was pleasingly rural. For this evidence of taste the present occupant was not entitled to the sole credit since the clearing had been originally made by another, who was induced to sell out in consideration of a handsome advance upon the original cost. In like manner the nucleus of the present dwelling had been erected by the first settler. It had been but an ordinary log cabin containing two rooms, and wholly without architectural ornament. The purchaser, instead of pulling it down and erecting a dwelling more like those in the more settled parts of the country, determined to see what a transformation could be effected by taste in the somewhat unpromising material furnished him. Accordingly he elevated it to two stories and so enlarged it in the rear as nearly to double its accommodations. On two sides ran a rustic piazza, around the columns of which vines had been taught to clamber. It was but a log cabin still, but a log cabin in the highest style of art.

Beside the cabin a moderate space was devoted to the culture of flowers, and presented with its

many hues, crimson and golden predominating, a very attractive picture. This was under the especial charge of Mabel, who had brought the seeds with her from the East. Fortunately she had a more delicate appreciation of such things than the spinster who had accompanied them hither.

Mehitable Higgins deserves more than a passing notice at our hands. She was tall, angular, and bony, and to judge from present appearance could never have possessed a very large share of that beauty which is said to be but skin deep. Yet such is the liability to self-deception that Mehitable was by no means sensible of her deficiency in the matter of personal attractions, but evidently thought herself a handsome woman, in spite of her long and hooked nose, and her pursed-up mouth.

As Mehitable had attained the age of thirty-seven years without marrying, it was quite doubtful whether she would ever have an opportunity to do so. It was her habit, however, to indulge in mysterious hints respecting a certain Joshua Perkins, who, she would have it believed, was madly in love with her at some period in the past, but whom she had disappointed with a flinty refusal. She further hinted, for on this point she never came directly to the point, but spoke with a degree of circumlocution and indirectness, that the said

Joshua was plunged into such a state of distraction by his disappointment that he made frantic efforts to put an end to his existence, and was only deterred therefrom by the united efforts of all his relatives.

Mehitable was in her secret heart jealous of the superior youth and beauty of her young mistress, and was wont to deprecate as far as she dared the tastes and employments to which Mabel was partial.

"I don't see the use of giving up so much time to flowers and such trash," she was heard to say more than once. "They ain't good to eat, like cabbages and onions. All they are fit for is to smell of, and a body doesn't want to be smelling all the time."

"Didn't you like flowers when you were young, Hitty?" asked Jerry, whose great delight it was to provoke Mehitable.

"When I was young?" retorted Mehitable, pausing from her work. "One would think from the way you talk that I was an old woman. I'd have you to know that I am not so very much older than Mabel."

Jerry whistled.

This Mehitable correctly interpreted to indicate incredulity, and proceeded, "If you want to whistle, you'd better go out of the house. It's improper and impolite. You'd better be out in the

field hoeing them turnips instead of idling 'round here."

"Well, I will, Hitty——"

"There's no call for to address me with such familiarity," interrupted the spinster in a dignified manner. "My name is Mehitable."

"Well, then, Mehitable, would you be willing to tell me how old you are?"

"Thank goodness, I ain't ashamed of my age. I'm about twenty-five."

"Twenty-five!" ejaculated Jerry in comic consternation. "Oh, dear me!"

"What's the matter now?" demanded Mehitable sharply.

"Nothing; only I was thinking how bad I'd feel to look old when I was only twenty-five."

The spinister gazed vacantly at Jerry for a moment. Then, when she realized what his words meant, she shook her finger at him wrathfully.

"Clear out of this room instantly, Jerry Blue!" she cried. "If you don't, I'll go after you with a broom!"

"Don't grow excited."

"Will you go?" and she picked up the broom and flourished it freely.

"All right, I'll go. But I was going to tell you a great secret."

"A secret? What about?"

"Oh, never mind now."

"But what was it?" demanded the spinster, all her natural curiosity coming to the surface.

"It was about—but I'm afraid of the broom," said Jerry, shrinking back as if very much scared.

"I won't touch you."

"Yes, you will." And then Jerry ran off, leaving Mehitable to wonder what the secret could be.

"Guess he was only trying to fool me," she told herself at last. "That boy is always up to some trick or other. If I was Miss Mabel, I'd make him study more than he does. He hasn't half enough to do to occupy his mind."

The spinster was always anxious to make Jerry study. Truth to tell he was a good scholar, and made fine use of the two hours of instructions which Mabel Parkhurst gave him daily. But Hitty wanted him to stick to his books six hours instead of two, and to this Jerry would not listen.

Before proceeding further with our tale it may be as well to describe the other members of the Parkhurst household. The squire was tall of stature, and though but little over forty years of age had begun to stoop somewhat. There were in his face certain indications that his life had been clouded in the past, from the effects of which he had not yet recovered. His temperament was mild, and in speech he was somewhat

sparing of words. There was a contrast between his manner and that of his daughter, who was disposed to be lively and who habitually looked on the bright side of things.

The praises in which the landlord indulged respecting Mabel were deserved. Of medium stature, her figure combined plumpness with perfect grace and ease of movement. The freedom with which she exercised in the open air had been in the highest degree beneficial to health, and her clear eye and the rich bloom that mantled upon her cheek evinced nothing of that delicacy and fragility that too often characterize the young ladies of the present day, in large cities.

CHAPTER VI

JERRY'S HUNTING ADVENTURE

THE morning succeeding the stormy night was singularly beautiful. The sun was shining brightly. The valleys and meadows were green with waving grass, sprinkled plentifully with cowslips and dandelions—a morning on which life itself becomes a luxury and an intoxication.

Upon this day Jerry had pitched for carrying out a plan he had long been contemplating. It was briefly this: so recent had been the settlement of this part of the country that the shy denizens of the forest—the deer of the Indian hunting grounds—had not yet disappeared. Occasionally a hunter would bring one into the village, though, as the deer thinned out, such occasions became more and more rare, and became invested with increased importance.

It was this circumstance, perhaps, that shaped Jerry's youthful ambition. He had read unmoved the lives of distinguished writers and judges, but the thought of slaying a deer without assistance from anybody powerfully excited his emulation. He had now and then caught a glimpse of a deer

dashing rapidly through the forest walks, and felt no doubt that, if provided with a weapon, he could bring one down.

There was a gun kept in an outbuilding, belonging to a man whom Squire Parkhurst employed during the busy season. When Jerry had made up his mind to try his luck as a hunter, it was this weapon he proposed to use.

On this particular morning, after his duties were over, he took an opportunity when Mehitable was on the other side of the house, hanging out clothes, to steal into the place where the gun was kept, hastily seize it, and darting forth, make for the woods.

"Now I'm all ready to pepper 'em," cried Jerry exultingly. "I wonder what they'll all say at the house if I come home with a fine fat deer? It 'll keep us in dinners for a week."

Leaving Jerry to trudge along in the direction of the forest, we return to our acquaintance at the tavern.

Dick Clarke did not arise early; the fatigue of the previous day had been so great that exhausted nature required a longer time than usual to recuperate. When he did arouse himself the sun was already high in the heavens.

After two or three preliminary yawns he made his morning toilet.

"After all 'tisn't so bad a country," he solilo-

quized, taking a leisurely survey from the window of the varied scenery that lay stretched out beneath, in all the glory of morning sunshine.

"I thought last night that I should be heartily glad to get away from it—that is when my object is accomplished—but this morning puts quite a different face on the matter. The climate or something else has had a wonderful effect in promoting my appetite. I don't remember when I have been so sharp set. I think I'll go down and see what sort of a breakfast I can get."

On descending to the lower part of the house, Mr. Clarke found the table already spread and the breakfast awaiting his attack.

"I heard you stirring 'round upstairs," said the landlord, "and thought I'd have breakfast put on the table. We took ours about two hours ago, but calculated you might be tired and wouldn't disturb you. Hope you had a comfortable sleep."

"Capital, capital, my good host; it has given me a famous appetite. I have no doubt I shall do ample justice to your breakfast."

The fare provided might well tempt an epicure. However much the cities of the seaboard might have the advantage in other respects, they could not have furnished a more delicious meal than this rude tavern. The woods contributed wild honey and maple syrup, and these, with milk, eggs, hominy, corn bread, and the flesh of the wild

pheasant, furnished forth a meal upon the dispatch of which the newcomer entered with the greatest zest.

After half an hour busily spent he rose from the table with a sigh of relief, and in that comfortable state which accompanies a full stomach sauntered out to the bar-room, where he decided to complete his meal with a glass of brandy.

"What do you propose to do with yourself today?" asked the complaisant landlord. "I hope you'll find enough to amuse you, so that we can keep you here a good while."

"Perhaps you may, landlord. I certainly like your country very much better this morning than I did last night, and your breakfast has added to the favorable impression. I think I shall go out and reconnoiter a little. I think you mentioned a Mr. Parkhurst last evening."

"Squire Parkhurst."

"Yes, Squire Parkhurst. Whereabouts does he live? In the neighborhood?"

"Some distance off, sir. It must be three or four miles."

"And in what direction?"

"You see those woods there? Well it's on the other side of them that the squire lives."

"Then it would be a saving of distance for one that wanted to go there to go through the timber?"

"Yes, it would shorten the way a good deal. Are you going to see the squire?"

"I don't know as to that," said the other evasively. "As the country is all new to me, I might as well go there as anywhere to look about. Besides I can't help feeling interested in the daughter, after all that you have told me."

"Mabel Parkhurst is a hansum gal, thet's a fact, and will make a fine wife for young Davenport," said the landlord.

"Not if I can help it," muttered Clarke.

"What did you say, sir?" queried his host.

"Nothing of consequence," said the other hurriedly. "I think I'll try the woods, then, landlord, and perhaps I may seek out this man that you speak of."

"Wouldn't you like to take a gun with you, sir? There's a deal of game that, may be, you might like a shot at."

"Not this morning," said Dick Clarke. "I think I won't trouble you. Some other time, perhaps."

"Jest as you say, squire. The musket's at your service any time."

Thanking the landlord for his offer, our acquaintance took his way to the forest. It was well grown, some of the trees having reached an age almost patriarchal. Perhaps, if our friend had been a poet or a sentimentalist, he

might have experienced something of that pleasure which Byron found in the "pathless woods," but he was not troubled in that way. His mind was a practical one, and its peculiar training—for he had been educated as a lawyer—had a tendency to make it more so. He had always lived in a city or large town, and had little taste for, or appreciation of, natural scenery.

As he was making his way through the woods he was startled by the cry of a strange bird that suggested to him the possibility of encountering some ill-disposed Indians, who, he had heard, were wont to be in ambush behind trees.

"It would be very disagreeable," he thought, "if some of the prowling savages, provided there are any, and this wood certainly seems lonely enough for their lurking place, should take it into their heads to make a mark of me."

Scarcely had this thought shaped itself in his mind when it was followed by the discharge of a gun, the bullet from which lodged in his hat.

Though perhaps not more timid than the majority of people, it is scarcely a matter of surprise that our hero should have been struck with consternation at this sudden attack, and, conscious that he was wholly unarmed, should have put in force his first instinctive impulse to flee.

But it so happened that the bullet, instead of having been sent from in front, had actually been

discharged by someone in his rear—so that the result of his attempt to escape was to confront him with the perpetrator of the assault in the shape of our would-be deer-slayer, Jerry.

When the eyes of Mr. Clarke rested on the boy running up with his gun swung across his two hands, eager probably to take possession of his game, he stopped short in stupefaction.

"Good Heavens!" was his first thought. "What a singular state of society this must be when a boy coolly makes a mark of any stranger he happens to meet. And there the young rascal is, staring at me, in disappointment, I suppose, to think his shot has not taken effect." He shook his fist. "What fiend possessed you to shoot me, boy?" he demanded sternly. "What have I done that you should seek my life?"

"Seek your life, sir!" repeated Jerry vacantly.

"Certainly. Don't you see that bullet hole? An inch or two lower, and it would have pierced my skull."

"I—I thought you was a deer," faltered the boy, beginning to be terrified for the consequences of his precipitation.

"Thought I was a deer! Do I look like a deer?" demanded the exasperated traveler.

"N—no, sir."

"Then what made you take me for one?"

"I heard you moving, and thought you was a deer."

"You did, eh! Why didn't you wait till you found out before you thought proper to shoot at me?"

"Because I was afraid, if I waited, I should miss you—I mean the deer, sir," said Jerry, getting more and more confused as his exculpation went on. "I—I—am sorry that——"

"That is very satisfactory," returned Dick Clarke, still irate. "You preferred the risk of killing me to the risk of losing your deer. Human life must be very cheap in this part of the world. May I inquire, as a simple matter of curiosity, how many men you have shot by mistake for deer during your hunting experience?"

"None, sir. You're the first deer I ever mistook for a man—I mean the first man I ever took for a deer," said Jerry, getting more and more mixed up in his speech.

"What should you have done in case you had killed me?"

"I don't know," answered Jerry helplessly.

"Give me that gun," said Clarke imperatively.

"Oh, you ain't going to shoot me, are you?" exclaimed the boy, terror overspreading his face, and his ruddy color giving place to paleness.

"Isn't it fair," asked Clarke, maliciously enjoying the boy's terror, "that I should have a

shot at you in return for the one with which you favored me?"

"Oh, don't, sir, don't! I'll never shoot at a deer again in my life."

"How is that going to benefit me? Perhaps you will shoot at me instead."

Jerry vehemently protested that he cherished no such sanguinary intention, and Clarke, to his great relief, did not insist upon the retaliation referred to.

"Where do you live?" asked Clarke, after a pause.

"With Squire Parkhurst, over there."

"Ha! you are not his son? I never heard that he had any."

"No, I only live with him to do chores and such like."

"Then you can direct me to his house?"

"You ain't going to tell him about my shooting you?" asked Jerry apprehensively.

"I don't know. I haven't made up my mind."

"Then what are you going to see him for?" asked the boy anxiously.

"My boy, I advise you not to be too inquisitive. I may have other matters to confer with him about, beside this affair of yours. Conduct me as quickly as possible to his house, and I will take into consideration the expediency of informing him of your assault upon me."

"I hope Mehitable won't hear of it," thought Jerry, as he silently proceeded to obey Clarke's request. "She wouldn't let me rest night or day. I must say it's not such fun deer-hunting as I thought."

"This is certainly a promising commencement of my adventure," reflected Clarke. "Mabel Parkhurst little dreams how near chance has come to cutting short the career of one who proposes to do her the honor of becoming her husband."

CHAPTER VII

A CONFERENCE

When Jerry and his companion came within sight of the house, the boy began to exhibit symptoms of uneasiness, and he slackened his pace.

"What's the matter?" inquired Dick Clarke.

"I'm afraid they'll see me with this gun," said Jerry. "I hadn't ought to have it, and Mehitable's got sharp eyes. If you'd just as lieve wait a minute I'll dodge along and put it away."

"Very well," said Clarke. "But who's Mehitable?"

"She's an old maid that does the kitchen work. She's as homely as a board fence, but she thinks she's handsome, and that somebody will come along and marry her some day."

"Humph!" said Clarke. "On the whole, my boy, you needn't trouble yourself to come back. I can just as well go up and announce myself."

Feeling relieved by this assurance, Jerry proceeded to make his way stealthily to the building from which he had taken the gun. But fate was against him. Mehitable had gone out a moment

before to get some chips with which to replenish the fire, and met Jerry face to face as he was entering.

"Oh, you wicked, wicked boy," she commenced in a shrill voice. "Who gave you leave, I'd like to know, to carry off that gun?"

"Hush, Hitty," said Jerry in a mysterious manner. "I met a stranger in the woods who came up to the house with me. I reckon he's in search of a wife, and if you run right in you'll get a chance to open the front door and let him in. And who knows what may happen if he likes your looks?"

"What sort of looking man is he?" asked Mehitable, her curiosity and interest aroused. "How old is he?"

"About your age, I guess. It would make a capital match."

"I ain't certain as it would be right for me to marry after disapp'inting poor Joshua," said Mehitable pensively. "Is he—does he look as if he was pretty well off?"

"There he is, knocking at the door. Run, or you won't see him."

Forgetful of her dignity Mehitable paid heed to the recommendation, and a moment afterwards presented herself at the door to admit the stranger.

"This is Mehitable," thought Clarke. "It's

just as well to get into her good graces. I may hereafter have need of her assistance.

"Mrs. Parkhurst, I presume?" he said with a deferential bow.

"No, sir," said Mehitable, fluttering with pleasure at being mistaken for the mistress of the household. "Squire Parkhurst is a widerrer."

"Ah, indeed! A lady friend, then, I presume. May I inquire if the squire is in at this time?"

"What a polite gentleman he is!" thought Mehitable. "I was always told that I was very ladylike, and he seems to be a good judge.—Won't you walk in, sir, while I go and see?" she said aloud, in her most gracious manner.

"I think I will remain at the door. I am sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Oh, no trouble at all, sir," and Mehitable tripped away with as much grace and lightness as could be expected of a maiden of forty-seven.

Joseph Parkhurst was in the east room, so called, an apartment which was devoted principally to his use. The room was furnished more after the fashion of a city residence than a log cabin. A carpet covered the floor. The chairs were of mahogany curiously carved. One or two family portraits hung on the wall, and arranged on shelves was a collection of some forty or fifty volumes. Mr. Parkhurst—let us call him Mr., for, as we know, he was not a real squire—was

sitting at the window, out of which he gazed with a look that plainly took in little of the beauty that was spread out so lavishly before him. There was a listless look upon his face which betokened a spirit not at rest. Something he craved which the wilderness could not give.

"There's a gentleman at the door that wants to see you," said Mehitable, abruptly opening the door.

"A gentleman to see me!" repeated Mr. Parkhurst with some surprise. "Very well, you may show him in."

Dick Clarke entered the room with an affable smile, and bowed deferentially.

"Good-morning, sir," said Mr. Parkhurst hesitatingly.

"I see you don't remember me, sir. It is not strange, as, though your person has long been familiar to me, I have never had the pleasure of exchanging a word with you. By way of introduction let me announce myself as Richard Clarke, of New York, an humble disciple of that profession which counts so many master minds among its devotees—I mean the law."

"You are a lawyer, then, Mr. Clarke?" said Mr. Parkhurst. "Have you come here with an intention of establishing yourself?"

"No, sir. I confess to a preference for the more thickly settled part of the country. You

will perhaps be surprised when I tell you that my sole motive in making this somewhat arduous journey is connected with yourself."

"With me?" exclaimed Mr. Parkhurst, lifting his eyes in profound astonishment.

"It is even as I say," said the lawyer. "I may add that my visit may redound to your advantage. This, however, depends in great measure on the manner in which you receive what I have to say."

"Proceed, sir," said Mr. Parkhurst. "You have aroused my interest."

"Before doing so," said Clarke, "I will recapitulate some events in your past history, that you may perceive how far I comprehend your present position. We shall then be better prepared to understand each other."

The lawyer, for henceforth this will be the easiest name by which to distinguish our acquaintance, at once commenced his narrative.

"I am perfectly well aware that, though at present an occupant of a house in the wilderness, you were born to wealth and social distinction which, but for untoward circumstances, would still be in your possession. Your father held a high colonial office previous to the struggle that eventuated in sundering the present States from the mother country. Although in that struggle he aimed to preserve neutrality, I believe I am cor-

rect in saying that his sympathies were rather with England than the colonies."

"I believe such to have been the case," said Mr. Parkhurst.

"This point, however, is immaterial. One of the acts to which it led, though, is of the highest importance. But before speaking of this, let me go on with my brief narrative. I believe your father's death was sudden."

"It was. He was struck with apoplexy which, though not immediately fatal, deprived him of speech, so that during the short time he had to live he was utterly unable to communicate with me."

"He appeared to have something on his mind that he wished to communicate?" queried the lawyer with a certain degree of eagerness in his manner.

"He did, and seemed to be quite distressed to think that it was out of his power to do so. But, sir—improbable as it appears, your manner leads me to ask the question—have you any conjecture as to the nature of this communication, which my father was prevented from making?"

"As to that, Squire Parkhurst, I may have or I may not. You will excuse me for being noncommittal just at present. Remember that I am a lawyer, and that this is a part of our trade. I have a question or two more to ask."

"Your manner is somewhat mysterious," said Mr. Parkhurst with some hauteur. "However, I will take it for granted that you have a sufficient motive for it, and will answer any questions of a proper nature you have to ask."

"It is only what I expected from a man of your intelligence," said the lawyer affably. "I will endeavor not to trouble you with any unnecessary questions."

"Go on, Mr. Clarke," said Joseph Parkhurst, exhibiting a degree of impatience in his tone.

"Did your father leave as much property as you anticipated?"

Mr. Parkhurst looked at the lawyer in some surprise, the question not being of such a character as he anticipated.

"There is no reason," he said after a pause, "why I should not answer this question of yours, although I cannot guess your object in asking it. I frankly admit, then, I was surprised to find the property less by one-half than I had supposed. However, nothing is more common than that public opinion should exaggerate the amount of property belonging to a person known to be wealthy. As I had never heard my father allude directly to the extent of his possessions, I was led to the conclusion that in common with the public I had been mistaken on the subject, or else, which was by no means improbable, that

in the troubles of that stormy period my father's wealth had been diminished by losses."

"The conjecture was a plausible one," said the lawyer, "but that which is plausible is not necessarily correct. Did it never occur to you that it might be upon this subject that your father wished to speak to you when suffering under the attack that proved fatal to him?"

"I have formed many conjectures on the subject," said Mr. Parkhurst, scanning the lawyer's face with interest, "but I confess that this never occurred to me. Have you any reason to suppose—your look seems to indicate it—that such is the case?"

"I have," said the lawyer briefly.

"And of what nature is this evidence?" asked Mr. Parkhurst eagerly. "Is it so decisive as to promise any advantageous results?"

"I have no hesitation in saying that it is."

"I await your further disclosures with impatience, Mr. Clarke."

"I must ask you to restrain your impatience for a moment. I think I have heard that of the diminished property that came into your possession, you were unfortunate enough to lose a large part. Is this the case?"

"The circumstances under which you see me living," said Mr. Parkhurst with some bitterness, "will be a sufficient reply to your question."

"I did not know but that your retirement to this romantic spot was dictated by a preference for country life."

"No, sir, far from it. I am not a sentimentalist. I have no taste for the country or country life. I was born in a city—at all events a considerable town, which is now a city—and should never have left if I could have continued to live there in the style to which I had been accustomed from my birth. But that could not be—the money which I inherited from my father, amounting to fifty thousand dollars, I was unwise enough to invest in speculations that promised large returns, although I ought to have been contented with the safer but apparently less productive investments which my father had employed. Well, sir, I need not go into details. Enough that I found myself reduced two years since to a comparative pittance through the failure of the schemes in which I had trusted. I could no longer live in New York save in the most humble way, and that the family pride which came to me with my inheritance would not brook. I had no mind to see myself looked down upon by those with whom I had associated as my equals, perhaps as my inferiors, and hard as the sacrifice was, I determined to cut loose the ties which bound me to my native place, and seek an humble asylum in this frontier district. I did

not expect to find happiness here, nor have I been disappointed. I find myself cut off from all the associations to which I had been accustomed, and forced to take up a life which has but a single redeeming trait. This is that I have removed myself far beyond the pity, indifference, or neglect of those whom I before knew. I have also the satisfaction of seeing that my daughter takes the change more kindly than myself. I am not sure even but she prefers the present life to that of the city. I cannot comprehend it. I think she must differ essentially in tastes and temperament from myself."

"I think I could explain it," thought the lawyer. "I am very much afraid she is in love with this young Davenport. Lovers at her age are very apt to overlook all else."

"Well, sir," resumed Mr. Parkhurst, "I have now expressed myself at greater length than I intended in relation to my position here and how I look upon it. I am now ready and anxious to hear anything which you may be able to communicate upon this subject, which, as you must have discovered, is so near to me."

"I will come to the point at once, sir," said the lawyer, "by stating that I have the power of replacing you in your old position, and enabling you to reappear among your former friends and associates with the same advantages of wealth

the loss of which has driven you to seek a home in the wilderness."

Mr. Parkhurst was not prepared for this revelation. It seemed too strange, too improbable to be true. And yet if it should prove a fact! His face flushed with new-born hope, his lips parted in eagerness, and in an agitated tone he said:

"Surely you will not mock me with delusive hopes!"

"Surely not, Mr. Parkhurst," said the lawyer, scanning him narrowly. "I promise nothing which I am not able to perform."

"But this seems so mysterious! How can you, a stranger, possess this power?"

"Chance, sir, has thrown it into my way. But as you will naturally enough desire a confirmation of my words, I will so far task your patience as to relate briefly the manner whereby certain facts, having a weighty bearing upon your interests, became known to me."

"Do so, sir. I am all attention."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

"WHEN you left the city a few years ago," commenced the lawyer, "you sold a large part of your furniture at auction."

"All, except the little that you see in this room, with a few other articles," answered Joseph Parkhurst.

"So I understood. Among those who were attracted to the auction by curiosity or the desire of making purchases was myself. I was not tempted to purchase until a desk of an antique pattern was put up by the auctioneer. Finding it going at a low figure, and having need of an article of the kind, I ventured to bid upon it, and it was knocked down to me."

"Then you were the purchaser?" said Mr. Parkhurst, looking up suddenly.

"I was," returned the lawyer, a little surprised.

"It was one of the few articles," explained Mr. Parkhurst, "which I had intended to reserve, but owing to some misunderstanding between the auctioneer and myself my direction was not fol-

lowed. If either my daughter or myself had been present we should have forbidden the sale, but, for reasons which you will readily guess, the thought of being present was a painful one, and we were both out of the city. When I returned the next day I desired to obtain it even at a large advance, but found that the auctioneer retained no recollection either of the name or person of the purchaser, and entry had been made only of the amount for which it sold. If you would be willing to sell it at any reasonable valuation, I should be glad to purchase it."

"I will set no valuation upon it, Mr. Parkhurst, but without consideration of any kind will with pleasure forward it to you when I return to New York, if indeed I am not favored with your company thither."

"I acknowledge your courtesy," said Mr. Parkhurst with a degree of reserve, "but I should prefer at least to pay you the sum you gave for it."

"That was so trifling that the use of the desk has already reimbursed me."

"Then, sir," said Mr. Parkhurst with a degree of reluctance still perceptible in his tone, "it only remains for me to accept your obliging proposal. But you will pardon my interruption, and proceed with your narrative."

"For a considerable time," resumed the law-

yer, "I made use of the desk without feeling any especial curiosity about it. But one day curiosity led me to examine with more particularity the numerous little drawers and compartments that it contained, and while thus engaged my finger chanced to press a secret spring which at once revealed the presence of a drawer whose existence I had not before suspected.

"Indeed, this is new to me," said Mr. Parkhurst with surprise.

"Then your father never communicated to you that the desk contained such a drawer?"

"Never."

"I need scarcely have asked the question, however, as otherwise you would have made the discovery it was reserved for me to stumble upon."

"A discovery!"

"Yes, and one of importance, as you will admit."

"Its nature?" questioned Mr. Parkhurst, fixing his eyes eagerly upon the lawyer.

"The drawer, which was a small one, contained a closely written paper in which your father went on to say that in the troubled state of the period—you know at his death the revolutionary struggle was not decided—I say in consideration of the unsettled state of politics he had decided as a measure of proper precaution to

conceal in a secure hiding-place one-half of his property, which he had with that design converted into gold."

"Indeed," said Mr. Parkhurst with an air of surprise. "I had not suspected it. It was in relation to this, no doubt, that my father desired to speak to me when he was so suddenly seized."

"You are no doubt correct."

"However, it has not been allowed to remain a secret. I suppose the place of concealment was mentioned."

"It was," answered the lawyer briefly.

Mr. Parkhurst looked expectant, awaiting the revelation. But the lawyer was not inclined to speak.

A little surprised, he said after a pause, "And this place?"

"My dear sir," said the lawyer, "I may as well be frank with you. I consider this document as a sort of treasure-trove, to which the finder is not without claim."

"Would you lay claim to my inheritance?" exclaimed Mr. Parkhurst with indignation.

"Pardon my bungling mode of expression," said Clarke. "You have misunderstood me, but it is my fault. I mean that it is only to be expected that I should expect to reap a little advantage from this windfall of fortune."

"In other words you think you ought to re-

ceive some reward for your agency in the matter?"

"You have expressed my meaning, Mr. Parkhurst. You know, sir, we professional men are apt to regard such things from a professional point of view, and however it may be with others, I do not pretend to be above the weaknesses of humanity."

"Of that, sir, I have no disposition to complain. I trust I am too much of a gentleman to be guilty of the meanness of leaving you without compensation for so essential a service as this."

"Thank you, sir. I felt sure that such would be your sentiments."

"The only thing that remains, then, is to fix the amount of that compensation. Would you regard two thousand dollars as sufficient?"

The lawyer cast down his eyes, and was silent.

"I see that you do not so consider it," pursued Joseph Parkhurst. "Although I do not absolutely promise to accede to your proposal, yet I should wish you to be satisfied. Will you therefore have the goodness to name the compensation which you yourself would consider sufficient?"

Again the lawyer hesitated, as if in doubt.

"The compensation which I desire," he said at length, "is perhaps of a different nature from that which you anticipate."

He paused again, and Mr. Parkhurst, though surprised, signed him to go on.

"You have a daughter, Squire Parkhurst?"

"Assuredly, though what she can have to do with this business is more than I can understand."

"I remember your daughter as she appeared in the city. I used to meet her every day on her way to and from school. She is very beautiful."

"I think, Mr.—ahem, Mr. Clarke—that it is a business matter we are discussing," said Mr. Parkhurst stiffly.

"Very true, sir. I have by no means lost sight of that. As you are evidently impatient for me to come to a conclusion, I will state as explicitly as it is in my power that the only reward I seek is the hand of your daughter in marriage."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Parkhurst, rising in indignant surprise, and looking down upon the attorney, with infinite astonishment blended with scorn. "Do I hear aright? Is it the hand of my daughter that—that——"

"That I seek in marriage," suggested the lawyer coolly. "You are quite correct."

"Who are you, sir? What is your pedigree, that you should have the presumption to make such a proposal?"

"As for my pedigree, I take it that it corresponds with yours when you get far enough up. We are both, I believe, descended from Adam, or,

if you want to come nearer, I think it probable that Noah is our common ancestor."

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?" said Mr. Parkhurst hotly.

"It certainly would not be very decorous to insult a man whom I have invited to become my father-in-law."

"Probably this is a jest. I regret that it should prove such a sorry one. I am willing to forget it, and will now ask you again to fix upon some compensation which you would be pleased to consider adequate."

"Squire Parkhurst," returned his visitor firmly, "I am not in the habit of jesting, and I am in the habit of saying what I mean. I repeat, then, that I am willing to put you in possession of this sum of fifty thousand dollars—a sum that will enable you to return to the city and resume your former style of living on this condition alone, that you give me the hand of your daughter in marriage."

Joseph Parkhurst paced the room in no little agitation. He was of what is conventionally designated as a high family, and his pride and prejudices revolted against the proposed union of his daughter with an obscure lawyer of no lineage. It is to be feared that this consideration weighed with him far more seriously than the thought of incompatibility in important respects by which

his daughter's happiness would be likely to be imperiled. Like many of that day he considered love to be but a secondary matter in a marriage contract, and considerations of family and fortune of paramount importance. I have thought it necessary to enter into this explanation in order that the full force of Mr. Parkhurst's objection may be fully apprehended.

The lawyer watched him narrowly as he paced the room, and easily penetrated the nature of the struggle through which he was passing. At the same time he thought he perceived that Mr. Parkhurst was a selfish as well as a proud man, and it was on this that he counted for the ultimate consent which he fully expected to gain.

"I know what the old fellow is thinking of me," passed through his mind. "He no doubt regards me as a mere nobody—as a vulgar adventurer perhaps—and considers it probably as a piece of the most flagrant presumption on my part to aspire to the hand of his daughter. The pride of these old aristocrats is perfectly measureless. Strip them of everything else, and that remains. Well, I can wait till he has made up his mind in my favor. I have no doubt that he will do it sooner or later."

By this time Joseph Parkhurst had made up his mind to another appeal.

"I think," he said, addressing the lawyer, "I

understand your motive in proposing my daughter's hand as the condition of revealing the information of which you have come into clandestine possession."

"Allow me to correct your phraseology, sir," said the lawyer mildly. "The word clandestine conveys a suspicion of my honor to which, as a matter of course, I object. Suppose you substitute the word 'accidental' as more befitting the actual circumstances."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Parkhurst, biting his lips. "I repeat, then, that I think I comprehend the motive which prompts you to make application for my daughter's hand. You think thus to extort from me——"

"Extort!"

"Obtain, then, from me a larger sum for the information of which you have come into accidental possession."

"My dear sir, you greatly underrate your daughter's attractions, if you think that I have introduced her in this way."

Not heeding this disclaimer, Mr. Parkhurst proceeded: "This being the case, I yet feel that I am to a certain extent in your power. You have, honorably or otherwise, I will not say which, obtained a hold upon me. If you choose to demand an extravagant price for your information, I am compelled to submit to your terms."

"You do accept my terms!" exclaimed the lawyer eagerly.

"You are too fast, sir," said Mr. Parkhurst coldly. "I so far yield to your demands that I will agree to give you the marriage portion which I should design to bestow with my daughter, this being, as I conceive, what you really are aiming at. That portion will be ten thousand dollars, or one-fifth of the property of which I expect to come into possession."

"I regard the marriage portion as liberal, Mr. Parkhurst," was the lawyer's reply, "but in one point I grieve to disappoint you. I should of course expect to receive a marriage portion with your daughter, but I must insist on her going with it."

Joseph Parkhurst drew back haughtily. "Sir," he said, "I regret to find you so persistent in refusing what I regard as an unusually favorable offer on my part. You must be aware that in respect of birth and station my daughter is no suitable match for you."

"I frankly admit it," was the unexpected reply, "and perhaps it is for this reason that I feel a strong desire to mate myself with one who possesses what I lack. I desire to elevate myself by marriage, and circumstances have pointed to your daughter as the one to whom I can with the most propriety look as a member of such a

partnership. Her uncommon personal attractions of course recommend her further, and therefore I shall continue to insist upon this point."

"And if I break off the negotiations peremptorily, and for ever?" demanded Mr. Parkhurst. "You will then have gained nothing by your discovery."

"Pardon me," said the lawyer coolly. "You appear to forget one very important circumstance."

"And what is that?"

"I know where the money is concealed!"

"Good Heavens! You would not possess yourself of it to the exclusion of the true owner?"

"I certainly would. Indeed I take credit to myself for not having so done without speaking to you on the subject at all. You must allow that you at least would never have been the wiser, nor have had the slightest suspicion that you had met with a loss."

Mr. Parkhurst groaned and covered his face with his hands, as he realized the truth of these words and the extent to which he was in the power of the man before him.

"However," pursued Dick Clarke coolly, "I did not do as I have said I might, for more than one reason, perhaps, but certainly not least because I hoped to become your son-in-law, and I have the good taste to value youth and beauty

above the mere dross of gold, which, however, is a very good thing in its way. But, sir, I see that in an event of this importance you are naturally unable to decide at a moment's notice. I will therefore retire for the present and take another opportunity of calling upon you. In the meantime I shall take up my residence at Hill's Tavern, where you can readily hear of me, if you should desire to confer further on this important subject. I have the pleasure of wishing you a good-morning."

"Good-morning, sir," was the stiff reply, and a moment later Dick Clarke was out of the house, leaving Joseph Parkhurst a prey to conflicting emotions.

"I think he'll come around in time," the crafty lawyer told himself. "He won't want to lose that money, and when he sees he must either give up his daughter or lose it, he'll give in."

Although Dick Clarke did not know it, two persons watched his departure with interest. These were Mehitable, who gazed forth eagerly from a kitchen window, and Jerry, who was lurking behind one of the tall rose bushes.

"A handsome man," thought Hitty. "If only he had stopped around for a drink of water or something. I'd like to talk to him. I don't think he's married."

Jerry's opinion was not so favorable. From

the start he had noticed the crafty look on Dick Clarke's face.

"That fellow is a sharper if ever there was one," thought the boy. "I don't believe he is up to much good. What brought him away out here, anyway?"

"Jerry!" called the spinister.

"What do you want now?" asked the boy, coming around to the kitchen door.

"Did you see the gentleman go?"

"Yes."

"He seems like a very nice man."

"Would you marry him, Hitty?"

"What questions you ask! Go and get me a pail of water this minute."

"But would you?"

"Time enough to answer that question when he asked me to."

"Was the squire glad to see him?"

"I don't know. I don't play the eavesdropper. Jerry Blue. Now go and get the water, or you'll get no dinner."

And then Jerry went, for his appetite was good and he could not bear to think of missing a meal.

But for a long time after seeing Dick Clarke he could not get the lawyer out of his mind.

"'Pears to me I've seen him before," he mused. "At Dan Cass's or the poorhouse, or somewhere. I wish I knew for certain."

CHAPTER IX

JERRY HAS SOME FUN

ALL through the dinner hour Jerry failed to get Dick Clarke out of his mind.

He ate with Mehitable, so he saw little or nothing of Mr. Parkhurst or Mabel.

"Hitty, did you ever see that gentleman before?" he asked during the meal.

"Never. Why do you ask?" returned the spinster.

"It's in my mind that I have seen him somewhere—but where I can't imagine."

"He has never been to this place. Perhaps you met him at Hill's Tavern."

"No, I think he's a stranger to these parts."

"Then you think you saw him before you left New York?"

"I ain't sure of it; but his face looks familiar."

"He had a long and earnest talk with the squire, and once they spoke so loud I thought they were quarreling. But what it was about I don't know," went on the spinister, after a pause.

"Perhaps he come for money."

"If he did, I guess he went away disappointed. The squire is hard pushed and has none to spare. The crops weren't half as good last season as he expected them to be."

"It's queer the squire came away out here."

"He was too proud to stay in the city after he lost the most of his money."

"Then he used to be rich?"

"Yes, and his father before him."

"Wish I was rich," continued Jerry with a sigh.

"Perhaps you will be some day, Jerry. How would you like to find out that you are the missing son of a millionaire?"

"That would suit me to death."

"I think it's awful to be roaming around this world not knowing who you be," went on the spinister, regardless of how she might hurt Jerry's feelings by the remark.

"I think so myself. But what am I to do?"

"Do? Don't ask me. If the squire and Miss Mabel couldn't find out anything about you, it would be pretty hard for anybody to do it."

"I believe you. But I am going to find out some day, and don't you forget it."

Jerry felt very serious, but after he had satisfied the cravings of his stomach he felt better, and when he left the house he was whistling gayly.

For two hours after dinner Jerry worked in the garden and hoed the corn patch, and then slipped away to do a little fishing at the upper end of the pond near the house.

As he walked along the edge of the pond he saw a handsome-looking young man coming toward him. This was Henry Davenport, already mentioned in these pages as a great admirer of Mabel Parkhurst.

"Hullo, Jerry!" called out the young man pleasantly. "Where are you bound?"

"Fishing," answered Jerry with a grin.

"Good enough. I trust you get a good haul."

"So do I, Mr. Davenport. Don't you want to go along?"

"I can't spare the time, Jerry. Is Miss Mabel at home?"

"She was at home half an hour ago. But I think she went out for a walk."

"In which direction?"

"Off that way," and Jerry jerked his thumb in the direction.

"All right, I reckon I can find her."

Henry Davenport started to go on, but Jerry stopped him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Davenport, but have you been to Hill's Tavern lately?" he questioned.

"No, Jerry, not for the past ten days or two weeks."

"Oh, all right then."

"Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering if you had met the gentleman who called on the squire to-day. I think he is stopping at the tavern."

"No, I haven't met any strangers lately. Some friend of Squire Parkhurst?"

"I don't know if he is a friend or not. He spent a couple of hours with the squire."

There was a pause and then the two separated, Jerry to fish in a hole that was a favorite spot with him, and Henry Davenport to go on a hunt for Mabel.

If there was one thing Jerry could do well it was to fish, and ere long he had a mess of sixteen finny beauties to his credit.

"There, I don't think anybody could do better than that," he told himself with much pride. "Sixteen of 'em, and hardly a one less than three-quarters of a pound. Now we'll have fresh fish, even if we don't have fresh deer meat."

In the meantime Henry Davenport hunted, at first in vain, for Mabel Parkhurst. But at last he found her not far from the wilderness home. She had just picked a wild rose when he came up. Their greeting was a cordial one.

"I have been looking for you for over an hour," he explained as they sauntered off together. "Jerry told me you were out for a walk."

"Where is he?"

"I left him getting ready to fish. I don't know where he is now," answered Henry Davenport.

He was very much smitten with the beautiful girl, and presently he begged her to make him a gift of the wild rose she had plucked and which she now held just out of his reach. She shook her head playfully.

"But why won't you give it to me, Mabel?" pleaded the young man.

"Why won't I, sir? Because you are altogether too acquisitive. Why should you deprive me of my poor little rose when there are so many others on the bushes close by?"

"But they are not the same to me, Mabel."

The lively girl pretended to misunderstand him, while his persistence really pleased her.

"You mean that I have helped myself to the best one. For shame, Henry, to accuse me of such selfishness."

"Well, Mabel, I will make you a proposal."

"Hadn't you better make it to Mehitable?" said Mabel slyly.

"Pshaw! I was going to say that I would get another rose and then exchange with you."

"I don't see what advantage there would be in that," said Mabel with provoking obtuseness.

"But you will agree to it, nevertheless."

"No, sir, I shall not encourage you in your whims. It is time you began to exercise a little self-denial."

"But you know I am not used to that."

"So much the better. Perhaps, under my training, I may be able to make something of you."

"Will you, indeed, take me under your training, Mabel?" asked the young man earnestly.

"I fear it would be too great an undertaking," said she, shaking her head. "I am afraid you would make a very troublesome responsibility. Perhaps Mehitable——"

"Confound Mehitable!"

"What has poor Mehitable done? Do you think I will stand still and hear her abused in such fashion?"

"Oh, I have no doubt she is a very estimable old lady, but——"

"Old lady! It would be hardly safe for her to hear you speak of her thus. By her own account she is only about thirty."

"Heaven preserve her then from ever living till sixty! She will look old enough to be the great-grandmother of all living."

"Poor Mehitable! I see you have a prejudice against her. But how we have been wasting our time! If you will come to the house with me, I will give you some cake of my own making."

"That will certainly be a powerful inducement.

But why need we be in haste? It is so much pleasanter here in the open air."

"I don't feel as if my friendship for Mehitable should permit me to remain longer with one who is so wanting in appreciation of her charms."

"But, Mabel," said the young man, "I am ready to make amends for that."

"How? By proposing to the young lady? I think she will accept you."

"How provoking you are, Mabel! But since you have tempted me, I am going to be guilty of an act of daring."

"I! Tempting you to an act of daring! I think, Henry, that you overrate my influence!"

"You are quite incorrigible!"

"I am glad you admit it. Now you will see how hopeless a task it will be to attempt reforming me."

While the latter part of the conversation was going on they had gradually advanced to the base of an old tree of huge proportions—a perfect Titan among the forest trees—under which for convenience' sake a seat had been erected.

"Sit down a moment, Mabel," said young Davenport with a sudden change of tone; "there is something I have wished to say to you a long time. I feel that the time has come for saying it now."

"Perhaps you are about to confess some guilt

that lies heavy on your soul," said Mabel lightly, although her heart beat faster than its wont, for with the subtle premonition of a true woman she felt what it was that Henry Davenport was about to say.

"I am, indeed, about to make a confession," said the youth seriously, seating himself beside her.

She did not venture to look up, for she knew that she could not meet the steady gaze of his eyes without betraying her own feelings.

"I am ready to hear your confession," she returned, while mechanically she began to pull apart the rose which had been the subject of dispute between them.

"I hope, Mabel, you are not unprepared to hear that I love you," said the young man abruptly. "Pardon my coming to the point so bluntly, but I cannot help following the bent of my feelings."

The roses were brighter than ever on Mabel's cheek, but she could not avoid giving way to her natural archness.

"It is a worse offense than I anticipated," she said, "but if you do truly and sincerely repent of it, I may extend you my forgiveness."

"No, no," said the young man eagerly. "I do not feel the slightest particle of repentance."

"But, perhaps, if you make a slight effort——"

"Pardon me; that I have no intention of doing."

"Then," said Mabel demurely, "I am afraid I shall have to forgive you on your own terms."

She looked so attractive at that moment,—her eyes half veiled in maiden shyness, her cheeks tinged with a crimson flush,—and her answer conveyed so much hope and encouragement, that Henry Davenport may be pardoned for yielding to the temptation to which he was subjected and stealing a kiss.

The action was so sudden that he was completely successful.

"How dare you, Henry!" exclaimed Mabel, who was not, however, very seriously offended, when her intended rebuke was cut short in an unexpected manner.

The sound of a laugh, half-suppressed and suddenly checked, smote upon the ears of both at the same moment. Mabel with a deep blush separated herself from the embrace of her lover, and looked about her with an air of confusion.

The young man started to his feet and looked in various directions for the author of the unpleasant interruption, but no one appeared to be in sight.

"Didn't you hear a noise, Mabel?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That sounded like someone laughing!

"Yes!"

At this moment a rustling caught the attention of both, and revealed the whereabouts of the spy upon their privacy.

Perched among the branches of a tree at a little distance was Jerry, with his string of fish.

Now it is not very agreeable to be disturbed in an agreeable tête-à-tête, and it was in a stern tone that Henry Davenport called out:

"What mischief are you doing up there, Jerry?"

"I ain't doing any mischief," said the boy boldly.

"Then why did you go up there? What other inducement could you have?"

"There's a good prospect from here, Mr. Davenport," said Jerry, laughing out of the corner of his eye.

"Humph!" said the young man, coloring. "That is no answer to my question."

"I ain't responsible to you as I know of," said the boy. "I'll answer Miss Mabel there, though perhaps it's all the same."

This was said in so droll and knowing a tone that neither Henry nor Mabel could help laughing.

"Well, Jerry, come down, and I will give you something," said the young man good-humoredly.

"A licking, perhaps?" suggested the wily Jerry, not stirring.

"No, Jerry, of course you wouldn't stand in need of that. But here's half a dollar for you."

At sight of the coin, the boy slid down the tree with wonderful rapidity and presented himself before the young man.

"Of course, Jerry," said Henry, "you know that we feel an interest in you, and if you *behave well* you may get another."

Jerry perfectly well understood what was implied by the expression emphasized, and signified as much by a very knowing wink.

"I understand, Mr. Davenport," said he. "It ain't always necessary to tell what a feller sees. Did I tell you that Mehitable thinks she's got a beau?"

"Mehitable got a beau!" exclaimed Mabel, forgetting her own embarrassment.

"Just ask her, if you don't believe me," said Jerry, and strode off, with his half-dollar in one hand and his string of fish in the other.

CHAPTER X

SECOND THOUGHTS

THE lawyer's visit had operated upon Joseph Parkhurst as a stone thrown into a pool—producing movement and agitation, a general feeling of unrest, which time alone could calm. There are some natures that seem made for a particular sphere and are not pliant enough to adapt themselves to the requisitions of another. So it was with him. He had been bred to all the privileges which wealth and high birth bestow, and in a quiet way had been in the habit of looking down upon all who did not move in the same circle with himself. He was one of those who cherish a devout belief in the superiority of gentle blood, and still felt a secret loving for the old continental régime when such things possessed a higher value than afterwards.

To such a man the sudden downfall which has already been described proved a severe blow. The thought of ranking with those whom he had regarded with condescension only, and of being treated as an inferior by those with whom he had hitherto moved on terms of perfect equality, was

indeed bitter to one of his disposition. He could no longer endure to live where he would be subjected to such mortifications. But for that imperative reason he never would have brought himself to what in his case might be fairly consider a desperate step—namely, a home in the wilderness. It was a sacrifice which he made upon the altar of his pride, but when the change was once effected, although it had the advantage of removing him from daily recurring scenes and encounters in which his proud spirit would have been chafed, it was very far from bringing him positive happiness or content. He had indeed exhibited a little interest in fitting up the cabin, but after that was completed he sank into a state of lethargy which gave Mabel, when she observed it, a vague feeling of uneasiness. But she, herself, was so thoroughly contented with the change she was unable to enter into her father's feelings. She had no longings after the old life which she had led in the city. Compared with the wild, free life of the woods, it had lost all its attractions. This was particularly the case after her acquaintance with Henry Davenport had ripened into intimacy, which led to their being almost daily together.

Both Henry and Mabel had many tastes in common. They delighted in long walks, or gallops upon the soft turf, and scarcely a day passed without some such mutual engagement. In ad-

dition to this, Davenport had placed a boat on the little sheet of water near the house, and would often row his fair companion across it. He had even taught her to manage an oar with considerable dexterity, so that she would sometimes laughingly order him to take his turn as passenger while she plied the oars. Entering into the humor of the jest he would lie luxuriously back, and watch the short, quiet strokes of his fair companion, not without admiring the plump and rounded arms, or the animated countenance flushed with the exercise and beaming with enjoyment.

But Mr. Parkhurst had no such pleasant associations with the country. The cultivation of land with all the wonderful phenomena of vegetation he regarded as irksome but essential to the support of the family. He therefore committed it to other hands, nor did he even reserve to himself the general superintendence of the farming operations, for which indeed he was as little fitted by experience as by inclination. No wonder, therefore, that he spent his time in restless discontent and vain longings after the life which he had left behind him in the city.

As long as he regarded his present state as inevitable, these feelings were kept under some restraint, and he submitted, though with an ill grace, to what he knew no complaints could rem-

edy. But after his conversation with the lawyer the feeling of disgust for his present circumstances and yearning for the past came upon him with redoubled force. The longer he thought of the possibility which existed of regaining what he so much coveted, the more desirable it seemed —the more unendurable it appeared to get along without them.

"To think," he murmured to himself,—as he paced his apartment with hasty steps, and a flush upon his usually pale cheeks,—"to think that I may again live in the old mansion which I was compelled to surrender; that I may again keep my carriage and entertain my old friends, and live as befits a gentleman of my rank and breeding! Ah, that will be living, indeed! I would gladly shake off all thoughts of this hut in the wilderness in which I have been compelled to immure myself. Living here is only vegetating. One year of my former life is worth five, nay ten, in this out-of-the-way place where I am deprived of all that I value. Yes, I may get it all back. He says so, and though he is not a gentleman, yet his story is a plausible one. But the condition——"

Here his countenance changed, and with some heat he exclaimed: "The low-born fellow has actually the audacity to demand Mabel's hand in marriage, and to make that the condition of re-

storing to me what is rightfully my own. I have a great mind to have him arrested."

A moment's reflection was sufficient to convince Mr. Parkhurst that such a proceeding would be ill-advised, inasmuch as he would be utterly unable to prove anything. The lawyer would undoubtedly meet his charges by a cool denial. He could hardly be expected to admit anything to his own detriment.

What, then, could be done?

There seemed to be but a single alternative, since the conversation recorded in the last chapter had left no room for doubt as to the strength of the lawyer's determination.

This alternative was, either to give up all thought of obtaining the money and its contingent advantages, or to submit to the condition imposed.

The last Joseph Parkhurst could not at first endure to think of; but being a man who had been accustomed through life to regard his own comfort and advantage of paramount importance, he began little by little to reconcile himself to it. This he was the better able to do because the objections were merely from his own prejudice, not from regard for his daughter's feelings. It then ultimately resolved itself to this, and in this form he submitted it to himself for consideration.

Would it be a greater sacrifice for him to put

up with an unacceptable son-in-law, or to spend the remainder of his life in a wilderness and a state of society which he detested?

It was not difficult to decide what the answer would be. It required only little time to arrive at it.

The lawyer had had the foresight to see this, and for this reason he had had the good policy not to insist upon an immediate answer to his proposition, but to give time for Mr. Parkhurst's selfishness to present the matter in its bearing upon his own comfort.

After Joseph Parkhurst had begun to reconcile himself to that branch of the alternative which would require from him the least sacrifice, the process became rapid.

"After all," he thought, "there is nothing in this man's profession which should interfere with his being a gentleman, and if he is lacking a pedigree the deficiency can easily be supplied by money. It can be reported that he has high connections in England, and as no one will take the trouble to go over and ascertain the incorrectness of the report, it will pass unquestioned. It is, I admit, presumption in him to make the demand; still, it is better to sacrifice a little pride for the sake of a great advantage. And besides, I don't know that Mabel is likely to make a more advantageous connection in this wild place."

It is to be observed that Mr. Parkhurst had never suspected the strong interest felt by Henry Davenport, nor, indeed, so much had his time been devoted to brooding over his own peculiar troubles, had he probably noticed the extent to which their intimacy had gone. He did not therefore anticipate the disarrangement which his plans were likely to receive from this source.

But this discovery was not long to be delayed. The avowal of love which had been made by Henry Davenport was followed by a subsequent conversation, in which both parties agreed to make the matter known to their respective families. The necessity of this communication troubled neither. No opposition was anticipated as both the families were on intimate terms, and in other respects there seemed to be no real difference except that Mr. Davenport was unquestionably much the wealthier. But, as he had no aristocratic prejudices to contend against, it was not likely that this would have any effect upon his mind.

"Father," said Mabel in a tone of hesitation, arising from the knowledge of the purpose for which she solicited an interview, "I should be glad to see you in the study a few minutes."

"Certainly," said her father, surprised that she should have anticipated a request which he had himself thought of making.

Mehitable heard this request though the half-open door, and the curiosity of the handmaiden—a quality of which she certainly had her share—was greatly excited.

"I wonder what she's got to say to her father," thought that lady. "Maybe she's going to complain of me. She told me yesterday that she thought the meat was overdone. A pretty chit she is to talk to me, that knew all about cooking before she was born."

Mehitable forgot that her expressions were of a nature to throw doubt upon her often asserted claims to juvenility. However, it is perhaps too much to expect one at all times to be consistent, and we will not exact too much of Mehitable in this respect.

In compliance with his daughter's request, Mr. Parkhurst proceeded to the study—as the room was generally called—which was appropriated, as before described, to his use.

Mabel followed with a flushed cheek, yet with a happy light in her eyes. She dreaded the task of opening to her father the subject of her love, yet she would not for a large sum have foregone the occasion of her embarrassment.

"I'd like to know what it is they're a-going to talk about," repeated Mehitable, as she prepared to clear away the table. "Perhaps the squire may say something about that fine young man

that came here yesterday, and seemed so struck with my appearance. I'd give a good deal to know who he is, and what is his business with the squire, and whether he thinks of settling down in this deestrict of country, and whether he's married, though I don't think he is, and whether he isn't in search of a wife."

Mehitable's volubility in wondering was very great, but it was at least fully equaled by her curiosity. Accustomed as she had been for many years past to consider, in regard to every man, whether he was available in a matrimonial way, the politeness of the lawyer, added to Jerry's hint, had worked upon her imagination to such an extent that she was already half persuaded that it required but an effort upon her part to bring the lawyer to her feet. That effort she was willing to make.

"Poor man! Perhaps he's had a misfortunate attachment, like my Joshua that I rejected because I didn't love him. But I'm sure I didn't object to somebody else making him happy, pervided he could make up his mind to like another arter his disapp'intment. So I think, if I could see it to be my duty, that I should be willing to marry this gentleman that seems so pretty and polite in his manners. I can't say but what I'd like to have a house of my own. There's some satisfaction in working for yourself and your own family that

there isn't in working for other people, that don't know how to appreciate you."

These thoughts passed through Mehitable's mind in much less time than I have consumed in recording them, and were soon terminated by the closing of the door after Mabel and her parent.

"I wonder if I couldn't creep up to the door and hear what they're a-sayin'," thought Mehitable to herself. "I've a great mind to. Mabel may say something about me, and I like to know what people says about me. I guess I'll take the dust brush with me, so's if the door should suddenly open, they'd think I'm a-dustin'."

This recommended itself to Mehitable as the best she could adopt, and she lost no time in putting it into execution.

"The dishes may stand," she muttered. "Jerry hain't had his breakfast, and though he don't deserve it, I guess I'll let the table wait for him a few minutes."

Seizing the dust brush Mehitable passed cautiously into the entry, treading on tiptoe and avoiding carefully even the least noise, intent upon gratifying her natural desire for information without the somewhat awkward accident of discovery.

She leaned her head forward so that her eye was close to the keyhole, and in this attitude listened eagerly to what was said. What she

heard was of even greater interest than she had anticipated.

But, alas for poor Mehitable! In her plans of avoiding detection there was one element of uncertainty of which she had quite forgotten to take note.

Jerry had gone out early in the morning in search of birds' eggs, of which he had already collected quite a variety, and this made him late for breakfast.

Entering the kitchen with bare feet he did not make sufficient noise to attract the attention of that lady. This was an unfortunate circumstance for her, as it proved. Entering the kitchen, Jerry naturally looked about for Mehitable. Not finding her he stepped to the entry door, and there, to his surprise, found her in the act of eavesdropping.

This was quite a delightful discovery to Jerry, who enjoyed nothing more than teasing the prim spinster, who, on her side, thought him the "boldest, most unbearable boy that ever she sot eyes upon."

"I'll fix her," thought the boy, after pausing a minute or two, hoping that she would look up and learn to her confusion that she was discovered. Jerry finally got tired of waiting and determined to precipitate matters.

Accordingly he gave a slight cough, which was

sufficient, however, to draw Mehitable's attention.

Turning suddenly she saw the boy looking at her with a whimsically knowing air, that clearly indicated that he very well understood what she was about.

Mehitable started with a guilty look, and her sallow face actually flushed.

"Why, Jerry," said she in a flustered manner, "have you got back? I thought I'd let the breakfast things stand till you got home, and as the entry needed dustin' I'd go to work doin' it."

"Do you generally dust the keyhole, Hitty?" asked the boy, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

"What do you mean, Jerry Blue?" inquired Mehitable with offended dignity.

"Oh, I don't mean anything, of course," said the provoking boy. "Only I saw you bending down with your ear close to the keyhole."

"I suppose you hain't any objection to my stoopin' over and tying up my shoestring," said Mehitable, in an injured tone.

"It took you pretty long to tie it, then. You didn't seem to be doing nothing for about five minutes while I was looking at you."

"Oh, you audacious boy!" exclaimed the badgered spinster. "How do you dare to say such things about a poor, unprotected girl that

hasn't ever done you any harm? I've lived for years and years——"

"There's no doubt about that, Hitty," said Jerry with a meaning look.

"Don't you interrupt me, you little wretch. I ain't too old to be your sister."

"Oh, my gracious!" exclaimed Jerry. "I should as soon think of being brother to my own grandmother."

"You can't have any tea this morning," said Mehitable spitefully, "for it has got cold."

"Then you'll warm it for me," said Jerry quietly.

"I will, will I? And who's to make me, I'd like to know?"

"I am."

"You!" retorted Mehitable in a shrill voice, turning up her nose in ineffable contempt.

"Yes, that is, unless you'd like to have me tell Mabel about you listening at the door."

This produced another outbreak from Mehitable, who nevertheless thought it most prudent to comply with the boy's demand—feeling that she had placed herself in his power. Nor was this the first occasion on which Mehitable had to rue the results of eavesdropping.

CHAPTER XI

A HARD ALTERNATIVE

When the father and daughter found themselves together a mutual feeling of embarrassment affected both. Each was considering in what way it would be best to open the conversation. At length the father spoke:

"I had a visitor yesterday, Mabel."

At that moment Mabel could only think of one person. She thought it possible that Henry Davenport, in his impatience to have the matter decided, might have called upon her father without her knowledge. In this case her father's answer, when she had requested a private interview, could readily be understood.

"Was it Henry Davenport?" she asked in a low voice, endeavoring not to look unduly interested.

"Henry Davenport!" repeated Mr. Parkhurst in some surprise. "Certainly not. I know of no especial reason for his calling. It was a lawyer from New York."

"Was he a stout man, of about forty, with a rather forbidding aspect?" inquired Mabel.

"No," said Mr. Parkhurst, hesitating, for it was his desire that his daughter should look as favorably as possible upon the stranger. "I should not describe him in that manner. He was not absolutely young, to be sure, nor I suppose what the ladies would call handsome, but you know beauty is not expected of a man."

"I won't quarrel with you on that point, father," said Mabel, laughing, "nor oblige you to defend him. Whether he is as homely as a rail fence or as handsome as an angel, he is nothing to me. I was only going to say that I caught a glimpse of him as he was walking in the direction of the tavern. I did not know that he had been here until I listened to Mehitable's enthusiastic praises of him after I returned. By her account he was very polite to her, and from the attentions which she hints at I judge that we must make up our minds to lose her. It would be a capital match, don't you think so?"

It was at this interesting point that Mehitable was compelled, by the sudden discovery on the part of Jerry related in the previous chapter, to abandon her post. She would have given a good deal to hear what followed, and never quite forgave the boy for disturbing her. The indifference with which Mabel spoke, however, relieved her from any fears of rivalry in the design which she had already formed upon the lawyer's hand.

Mr. Parkhurst, for obvious reasons, was not pleased with his daughter's manner of treating the subject. It promised ill for the sacrifice that he wished to propose to her.

"Mabel," said he with some severity of manner, "I shall be obliged to you to speak with less levity. To bring Mehitable into the conversation is entirely uncalled for, and the suggestion of a matrimonial connection between Mr. Clarke and a person occupying a menial position so far beneath his station in society is in the highest degree improper, and might justly be regarded as an insult by him, did he happen to be present to hear it."

"Father," said Mabel penitently, "you must pardon me for having spoken as you would not have me. I am naturally lively, and perhaps I have been carried too far. I certainly have, if I have incurred your displeasure."

"Mabel, my daughter," said the father affectionately, "you have ever been a good and dutiful daughter hitherto. I may by and by make still another demand upon your duty. But I am speaking of my visitor of yesterday. Do you remember hearing of him when we lived in the city?"

"No, sir; although his face looked slightly familiar."

"He had seen you, however. But that is not

to the purpose at present. Can you guess what was his errand?"

"No, sir. I suppose it could hardly be of a professional nature, as, since your——" Mabel hesitated to say failure, knowing her father's sensitiveness upon this point.

"Since the great misfortune, you mean, which drove me out into this wilderness to lead a miserable existence, deprived of all the sources of my former happiness."

"Do you, indeed, take it so much to heart?" said the daughter, taking her father's hand and looking in his face with sympathy. "I wish you could feel as I do. It seems to me as if I never lived till now. I delight in the wild freedom of the woods and the unshackled life which I lead here. In the city one is so hemmed in by conventionalities that it is impossible to feel yourself quite independent. Oh, my father, what can be more glorious than these stately forests and fertile fields. How beautiful it is to watch the sunrise from the hillock yonder. I could live here always without one longing for the old life that I led in the city."

"I don't pretend," said Mr. Parkhurst peevishly, "to enter into your youthful enthusiasm, and I marvel much that a daughter of mine, the descendant of a lofty family with whom nobles have not infrequently intermarried, should be

willing to confess such plebeian tastes. I cannot conceive what pleasure you can find in living in a miserable hut "—Mabel was about to utter an exclamation, but prudently refrained—" a miserable hut built of logs, in the midst of a rude, uncultivated race of people who care nothing for good blood, and fancy their plebeian stock as good as ours. I say I cannot conceal my astonishment that one so carefully reared should imbibe and give expression to such tastes. For my own part it has proved to me more unendurable than I anticipated. I remember once to have read an interesting account of a shipwrecked sailor named, I think, ' Robinson Crusoe,' who was forced to live by himself on an uninhabited island. The book was written by one Defoe, and was sent to me in a package forwarded from London. I little thought when I read it that I was doomed in my own person to pass through a trial equally hard, and to bear a solitude almost as intolerable."

" But, father, we have good neighbors, while Robinson Crusoe, if I remember rightly, was not so fortunate. You surely cannot compare your situation with his."

" Neighbors, Mabel? And what kind of neighbors? Do you think I can be on terms of intimacy with the rude, uncultivated settlers? "

" Surely you do not regard the Davenports in that light? "

"No, they are exceptions, I admit. But it would take many such to supply to me the place of all that I enjoyed in the city."

Mabel felt that nothing she could say was likely to divert her father from the melancholy view that he now saw fit to express. She accordingly, after a minute's pause, endeavored to change the current of conversation by suggesting a question.

"You were about to tell me on what business Mr. Clarke came, were you not, father?"

"Yes, Mabel," said her father, brightening up. "What will you say when I tell you that he has come to offer us the chance of resuming our old station in society; that he has it in his power to restore us a measure of wealth equal to that which I inherited and lost?"

"Father, you have excited my curiosity deeply. Has this indeed been as you say?"

"I do not wonder at your astonishment, Mabel. I was myself taken by surprise. But I can explain all in a very few words."

Mr. Parkhurst here entered into an explanation of facts already familiar to my reader, and which, therefore, do not require to be repeated. It is hardly necessary to say that Mabel listened with eager interest. The revelation gave her pleasure, but not for herself. The discontent her father had expressed with the mode

of life to which he was at present reduced led her, as a matter of course, to rejoice that means were provided for his restoration to the scenes which could alone content him. For her own part she had no desire to go back to the city, and would have considered such a removal a great sacrifice. But her union with Henry Davenport would render this unnecessary, and although it would pain her to be entirely separated from her father, she had no doubt that an arrangement could be made by which she could pass a part of the year in the city. For the rest, her father would be contented in that sphere which he was prepared to value the more because of his temporary withdrawal from it.

It was, therefore, with a glow of pleasure that she said, "Father, I am indeed heartily glad for your sake that your losses are likely to be so amply made up to you, and I hereby acknowledge my penitence for having spoken somewhat disrespectfully of the lawyer who is the bearer of this welcome intelligence. I shall henceforth adopt the opinion that bad looks are no indication of a bad disposition. But, father, you will remember that I, too, have something to communicate."

"Yes, Mabel, I do remember that you solicited the interview. Pray speak without hesitation, and if it is any favor which is in my power to grant, count it already granted."

"It is indeed a matter that vitally concerns my happiness, father," said Mabel in a low voice.

"Is it indeed so important?" asked Mr. Parkhurst, who as yet did not suspect the nature of the request which his daughter was about to make. "Indeed, I cannot conjecture what it is. Tell me without reserve."

Mabel rose from her chair, and sank at her father's feet in a childlike attitude.

"Father," she murmured, "I am very happy. Henry Davenport has told me that he loved me."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Parkhurst in undisguised dismay. "Can this be true? And do you love him, Mabel?"

Startled by her father's manner, Mabel answered: "I love him as my life, father."

Rising hastily to his feet, Joseph Parkhurst paced the room with knitted brow and disordered steps. Mabel watched him with equal surprise and anxiety.

"Father," she at length said timidly, "I hope that you know nothing unfavorable of Henry."

"I do not," said Mr. Parkhurst gloomily, pausing in his walk, "but, Mabel, this marriage, though it may bring happiness to you, can bring nothing but disaster and unhappiness to me."

"But, father, it needn't separate us," said Mabel eagerly, supposing that her father's objec-

tion was founded upon this. "Henry could arrange to live in the city a part of the time."

"Child, you do not understand the matter Your marriage with this young man would keep me a lifelong prisoner in this odious wilderness."

"But why should it? Could you not support an establishment in the city, and now and then come out to visit your children. The property which you are about to recover——"

"That property I shall never recover if you marry Henry Davenport," said her father gloomily.

"But what possible connection can there be between the two things?" questioned Mabel in perplexity. "Why should my marriage stand in the way of your recovering what is rightfully yours?"

"Sit down, Mabel—let us both sit—while I tell you. It is a circumstance which I regret nearly as much as you can. I have no personal objection to young Davenport. I would receive him gladly as a son-in-law, but there is one thing I have got to tell you. This lawyer demands a reward for his discovery of the letter which makes known to me the whereabouts of the treasure. That reward he has himself indicated. He has asked you as his wife."

"But what can he know of me?" asked Mabel in amazement.

"More than you think. You remember that he belongs to New York; that he has lived there many years."

"But I never met him, so far as I can remember."

"Perhaps not as an acquaintance. But the daughter of Joseph Parkhurst occupied a position which, as a matter of course, made her known to many with whom she was personally unacquainted. As he told me, he was accustomed to see you going to and from school, and at that time he conceived an admiration for you which has suggested the character of the recompense he asks."

"But surely he cannot know enough of me to be seriously interested in me. When he learns that I love another he will dismiss this idle fancy, and offer his addresses in some other quarter where they will be more acceptable."

Mr. Parkhurst shook his head.

"I am afraid, Mabel, that whatever else he is, he is an obstinate man. So far as I can judge, his mind seems to be set upon marrying you, and he will not accept anything else."

"But, father, he is probably fond of money. Offer him a large amount of money for his services—whatever he asks. Give him whatever you might otherwise intend for me. I care not for money. To me it is of no value compared

with the happiness which I shall enjoy as Henry's wife. Even if you are compelled to give him half of the whole sum, the remainder will yet support you handsomely. Only, my father, do not ask me to surrender all the happiness of my life to this man's keeping."

Mabel spoke with earnestness, her cheeks glowing with the excitment of her feelings, and her face lifted imploringly to her father's, which gathered gloom as she proceeded.

"I have already suggested this to the lawyer," he said, "but without effect."

"Perhaps you did not offer him enough."

"He distinctly told me that no offer, however large, would induce him to forego his self-named reward. Be assured, Mabel, that I desisted from no representations which would be likely to influence him. As he himself said, he might easily have concealed the matter from me, and appropriated the whole amount to his own purposes without fear of detection, since I should be wholly ignorant of the matter."

"And why did he not? I wish that he had."

"You seem to forget, Mabel," said her father reproachfully, "that my happiness as well as yours is involved in this matter."

"Forgive me then, my father; we are both unfortunate, we are both unhappy."

"But after all, Mabel, perhaps it will not be

so hard on you as you imagine. He is a respectable man, and being in love with you, would no doubt treat you with great kindness and affection. We could all live together in New York, and——"

"Father!" remonstrated Mabel, in pained surprise, "surely you would not recommend me to marry this man."

"I have seen more of the world than you have, Mabel," said her father, half conscious and half ashamed of the selfish motives which prompted him to speak thus. "I have seen more of life, and more of the world than you have, and I know that such marriages as this are often productive of happiness. Would it not be better to become the wife of a successful city lawyer than to spend all your life in the wilderness?"

"Father," said Mabel slowly, "you forget that I love Henry Davenport, and as for this man I not only do not love him, but Heaven help me! I am beginning already to hate him."

"These first loves are deceptive," said Mr. Parkhurst, still acting the part of an unworthy advocate of his own interests. "They are often mere fancies which die out with time. Take time to consider."

"Father," said Mabel, "in mercy cease. I feel that we do not understand each other. If I am to unlearn the sweet trust and confidence

which I have hitherto cherished, I do not wish to live. You have asked of me too great a sacrifice, one that I cannot grant without doing wrong to my whole nature. What! shall I go to the altar with one, when my heart is wholly given to another? You would not have me so recreant to myself and to God?"

"I see it is of no use to ask sympathy even from my child," said Mr. Parkhurst peevishly.

"Father, you have my full and entire sympathy."

"That sympathy is of little worth which confines itself to words," said the parent coldly.

"But it shall not. I will see this man myself. I will kneel to him, if necessary, and beseech him to take from me the hard choice of sacrificing myself, or bringing my father unhappiness."

"It will be of no use," said Joseph Parkhurst gloomily. "Yet go, if you choose. I will not attempt to control your movements."

CHAPTER XII

AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT

Richard Clarke was seated in his room at the inn. The apartment was perhaps the best that rude tavern afforded, though it could hardly be considered luxurious in its appointments. In one corner stood a cot bedstead. There was a chair at each window, and a small table, perhaps two feet square, between, over which hung a looking glass of scanty dimensions, which suffered under the further disadvantage of having been fractured by some careless occupant of the room in times past. There was no washstand, guests being expected to perform their ablutions below. At the lawyer's special request, however, a tin washbowl had been furnished, which stood on the table before mentioned, while a large tin dipper supplied the place of the pitcher.

The lawyer was seated on one chair while his extended limbs found a resting-place on another. A mug of cider on the table near by indicated that he was disposed to be convivial. A complacent smile which played over his features evinced that he was in a contented frame of mind.

"I've got him under my thumb," he soliloquized. "Thanks to my knowledge of human nature I read him at once, and made up my mind how to deal with him. I can see plainly enough that he doesn't particularly relish having me for a son-in-law. The old fellow's pride sticks to him yet. That's unfortunate for him, for it must be humbled. I have a shrewd suspicion, too, that the young lady won't be altogether willing to accept Dick Clarke as a substitute for that young spark of a Davenport. He seems to be quite a trim young gallant, and is handsomer than I ever was. I am very glad to say that I have a proper appreciation of my own want of beauty. I remember my father used to say, 'Dick's a rough-looking fellow, but he'll make his way in the world.' I mean to verify the old gentleman's prediction, if I live long enough. Let me take another look at the precious document which is, so to speak, the corner-stone of my prosperity."

Dick Clarke carefully drew from an inner pocket a letter somewhat rumpled. It was directed on the outside to Joseph Parkhurst.

"The old gentleman would give something to get hold of this," said the lawyer complacently. "With it he might snap his fingers at me, and leave me to crawl back to my dusty office at my leisure."

He opened the document and read it for the

hundredth time, it may be. As, however, it will be new to the reader, it may be well to transcribe its contents and set them before him.

"My Dear Son Joseph:

"Although it may prove to be unnecessary, yet in order to avoid all risk, in the event of any unforeseen contingency, such as my sudden death, I have thought proper to set down succinctly a step which I have felt it a matter of prudence to take, together with the reasons which have impelled me to take it.

"I need hardly say that, through inheritance and otherwise, I am the possessor of what is reckoned in these colonies a considerable fortune, amounting to not very far from twenty thousand pounds, and perhaps more. This will, in the natural course of events, descend to you, my only son. But in the present troubled state of the country [the letter bore date December, 1779] while a struggle is pending between the mother country and these colonies, the issue of which is doubtful, the security of possession is, as a matter of course, greatly endangered. It is for this reason that I have endeavored to preserve an outside neutrality. Yet as suspicions may arise, and as so often happens in such a struggle, I may on some pretext be deprived of my property, I have thought it my duty to adopt some means of pre-

serving at least a part of it to you independent of contingency."

"What a prosy and long-winded old fellow," muttered Dick. "He might as well have come to the point in half a dozen lines. But the best part of it is to come."

He resumed the reading of the letter, and we will follow his example.

"I have, therefore, with as much secrecy as possible realized the money value of one-half of my property, and at various times, as frequently as I dared, contrived to convert it into gold pieces. These I carefully laid away in a stout box, which now lies concealed. The chief object of this communication is to reveal to you the place of concealment, that if I should be taken away during your absence, the secret may not die with me.

"You will remember that small tract of land, embracing perhaps a couple of acres, at the upper part of the island, on which stands the cottage occupied by Black Phœbe, your old nurse. Being so much out of the way, I decided that this would be the best place of concealment which I could select. After some reflection I decided not to let her into the secret, and accordingly contrived a pretext for her temporary absence, during which

the box was conveyed by night to the spot, and buried at the foot of a tree. There will be no difficulty in finding the place, since, as you will perhaps remember, there is but this one tree on the place. It is an old apple-tree now past bearing, and stands just in the rear of the house. A hole was dug, four feet in depth, at the northeast corner, and the box, being deposited therein, was carefully covered over, the superfluous dirt being removed, so that there might be no trace left of the place having been disturbed.

"In this box will be found ten thousand pounds in gold—a sum that will enable you to live comfortably and as befits your station, even if you should be deprived of your remaining possessions. I trust, however, that this may not be the case, and that my precaution may prove to have been unnecessary. But however this may be, I shall feel that I have done my duty in adopting this prudent measure in your behalf.

"I am sensibly affected, my dear son, when I reflect that if you are ever to read this paper it will probably be when I am laid in the grave. Let me then speak as becomes such an occasion, and counsel you to preserve unimpaired the family escutcheon, which has not yet been stained by a dishonorable act. Remember that you come of a good family, and have noble blood in your veins, and so far as you are concerned, do not

suffer the name to lose any of that high consideration which has hitherto attached to it.

"In conclusion, my son, I will subscribe myself,

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN PARKHURST."

"The old gentleman little dreamed for whose eye he was writing," thought the lawyer. "If he had, he wouldn't have been quite so affectionate in his address—though it may turn out that I shall become, if not his son, the next thing to it—his grandson."

Dick Clarke slowly folded up this letter and replaced it in his pocket.

"I remember the old gentleman," he said musingly. "He was the very essence of respectability with his powdered hair, knee-breeches, and all that—I little suspected at the time that I should ever stand in any near relation to him, and I fancy that it was quite as far from his thoughts. Let them talk as they may of Dame Fortune, she can do a fellow a good turn now and then, and she has chosen to be kind to me. This beautiful wild flower has been growing up in the woods for me, and faith, I'll wear it."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of the landlord, who thrust his head in at the door, saying:

"There's a lady downstairs would like to see you, Mr. Clarke. Will you go down and see her?"

"A lady!" exclaimed the lawyer, starting from his chair in surprise. "Who is it?"

"Squire Parkhurst's daughter."

"Mabel!" returned Clarke, in surprise. "I will be down directly."

CHAPTER XIII

JERRY SPEAKS HIS MIND

It must be admitted that Jerry felt rich. Not only had he the piece given by Mr. Maxwell, but he had also the half-dollar given to him by Henry Davenport.

"If I keep on I'll be a millionaire," said he to himself, while at work in the garden patch. "I'm having a regular flood of good fortune."

It was such a fine day that the boy could not resist the temptation, some time later, to slip down to the pond for a swim. He had a favorite swimming hole, and here he splashed around for a good quarter of an hour. He wished he had a companion, but boys were scarce in that vicinity, so he had to take his enjoyment alone.

He had just dressed and was starting back to the field when he saw Mabel coming along the road that led to Hill's Tavern. The girl showed that she was much agitated, and Jerry stepped behind a tree to watch her.

"Perhaps she's going to call on that strange man," he mused.

As Mabel came up to the tree she paused, and

Jerry was amazed to see her wipe two big tears from her cheeks. She gave a sob and leaned against the tree trunk for support.

"Oh, Miss Mabel, what's the matter?" cried the boy, his heart melting at the sight. "Can I help you?"

"Jerry!" she ejaculated in amazement, and tried to hide her tears. "I did not know anybody was around."

"But what is the matter? What are you crying about?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, Jerry."

"Yes, it does. I don't want to see you cry," he answered bluntly. "Have you had some trouble with Mr. Davenport?"

"No, Jerry."

"Then maybe the squire's been scolding you."

"No. It—it's something else."

"Can't I help you?"

At this query Mabel smiled faintly. She loved Jerry, and his open-heartedness always appealed to her.

"I don't see how you can help me," she said.

"Perhaps I can, Miss Mabel. Anyway, I'm willing to try real hard."

"Jerry, you are very, very good."

"But what is it all about? Won't you tell me?"

Mabel paused. More than once in the past she

had trusted Jerry with her secrets, and he had never betrayed her confidence. She trusted him far more than she did Mehitable.

"Jerry, did you meet that man who came to see my father?" she questioned.

"Yes, of course I did."

"I mean, did you get the chance to talk to him?"

"Yes, I met him in the woods and showed him the way to the house."

"What did you think of him?"

"I didn't like him much," was the prompt answer.

"Why not? Don't be afraid to tell me."

"I thought he looked and acted like a sharper."

Mabel Parkhurst clutched the boy's arm and her face paled a little.

"Did you really think that?"

"Yes, I did. He didn't have the kind of eyes that I like. And his nose——"

"Never mind his nose, Jerry."

"Is he the man that has made trouble for you?"

"I am afraid that he is trying to make trouble both for father and myself. But you must not speak of this to anybody else, Jerry."

"I won't—if you want it that way, Miss Mabel. You know I can keep mum when I want to."

"Yes, I know that."

"What kind of trouble is he trying to make?"

"It's a long story, Jerry. It seems that years ago my grandfather hid away a lot of gold in a box."

"Has that man got it?"

"He says he knows where the gold is."

"And won't he give it up? If he won't, I'd have him arrested," cried the boy excitedly.

"Hush, not so loud, Jerry, or somebody may hear you."

"Ain't anybody around here. I looked around for Mr. Davenport when I saw you coming, but there wasn't nobody," and Jerry grinned.

Mabel's face flushed. "So you thought I was coming out to see him?" she observed.

"Oh, it's all right, Miss Mabel. Mr. Davenport is a nice gentleman."

"Yes, I agree with you."

"You couldn't marry a better," went on Jerry boldly.

"Thank you, Jerry. But we have lost track of our subject."

"That's so. What about this gold in a box? What is that man going to do with it?"

"He says he will turn it over to my father on one condition."

"And what is that?"

"You won't mention it, Jerry?"

"Not unless you want me to."

"He won't give up the gold unless I promise to marry him," and Mabel turned her face away to hide her burning cheeks.

"What, marry that fellow!" ejaculated the boy in open disgust. "Marry that old pug-nose! Don't you do it, Miss Mabel! Why, he ain't worth your little finger!"

"I do not wish to marry him."

"And you say he'll keep the gold if you won't."

"That is what he told my father. I have not spoken to him."

"But why does he want to marry you if he doesn't know you?"

"Father says he is anxious to elevate himself socially. Mr. Clarke—that's his name—says he used to see me in New York when I went to school there, and admired me in secret."

"Well, I can't blame him for that, Miss Mabel—you're so beautiful. But he's ugly—I wouldn't have him for a gift."

"I do not want him. But I do not wish to see my father suffer, Jerry. He has been used to a fine social position in New York, and life out here in the wilderness is very irksome to him. If he had the gold that his father hid away in that box, he could go back to the city and assume his old place among his friends."

"Well, I wouldn't mind going to the city myself. But I don't hanker to be so awful rich."

"I would be content to stay here," answered the girl.

"There ought to be some way by which you could make this Mr. Clarke give up that gold," went on Jerry, after a thoughtful pause. "If I was your father I'd make him do it."

"It is not so easy to do things out here as it would be in the city, Jerry. Officers of the law are scarce, and nearly every man is a law unto himself, as the saying is."

"Yes, I know that. Why, they even let that fellow go who stole Hill's brown mare. In some places that rascal would have been hung."

"Besides that, my father is not as young as he used to be, and even if we had this Mr. Clarke arrested, it would be difficult to prove anything against him. Of course he would deny everything."

"Then he didn't tell you where the gold was?"

"Oh, no."

"Perhaps it's a falsehood—there may not be any gold."

"No, I think he speaks the truth."

"Is he still staying at Hill's Tavern?"

"Yes. I am on my way there now."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to try to reason with him and see

if we cannot get the fortune from him without my marrying him."

"He doesn't look like a chap that would reason with anybody, Miss Mabel. He's got a regular bullet head."

"I shall do my best with him."

"But if he refuses you, what then?"

At this question the girl shook her head sorrowfully. "I am sure I don't know what will happen after that, Jerry."

"Well, don't you marry him, no matter what you do. Why, if you did that, you'd break Mr. Davenport's heart, Miss Mabel."

At these words the girl's tears flowed afresh.

"Do you really think that, Jerry?"

"Yes, I do. He's head over heels in love with you, and if you are going to marry anybody you ought to marry him," answered the boy, and after a few words more the talk came to an end and the pair separated; Jerry to continue his labor and Mabel to resume her journey to Hill's Tavern.

CHAPTER XIV

TRYING TO MAKE TERMS

THE lawyer, in spite of his frank confession of want of beauty, did not fail to pay some attention to his external appearance before going down to meet Mabel. He retied his cravat, which was awry, and with the aid of a comb and brush brought into somewhat better order the shock of hair that usually received little attention.

On many accounts the interview was one Mabel dreaded. She had come to plead with a man whom she did not know to resign his claims to her hand. She could not think of him without repugnance. Perhaps, indeed, she might be charged with indelicacy in coming alone to see him, but she was so straightforward, and impatient of delay, that she could not endure suspense and wished to bring matters to a point.

The lawyer came in with a smile that was meant to be encouraging, and bowing low, remarked, "Miss Mabel Parkhurst, I believe."

Mabel inclined her head gravely, while she answered: "You are right, sir. You are, I believe, Mr. Richard Clarke of New York."

"I am, and I may add that it affords me pleasure to make the personal acquaintance of one whose face has been familiar for years."

Mabel could not assure him of her own pleasure, and therefore remained silent.

"This is a charming country of yours," said the lawyer complaisantly. "These green woods and beautiful meadows make me think of fairyland. I had no expectation of finding the wilderness so attractive."

"Yes, it is pleasant," said Mabel absently. She was thinking how she might introduce the subject of her errand.

"But your father appears to be better pleased with city life," remarked Clarke, glancing shrewdly at his visitor.

"You have called on my father?" said Mabel abruptly.

"I had that pleasure. What a charming situation you have."

Impatient of this irrelevant speech, and desirous of shortening the interview as far as possible, Mabel took no notice of this complimentary observation, but proceeded: "He has informed me of the business that induced your coming."

"I beg you to believe that it is with the greatest gratification that I unexpectedly find it in my power to restore your father and yourself to the position for which nature designed you."

This Richard Clarke said with the air of one who was conferring a favor from the most disinterested of motives.

Mabel looked at him in surprise. "Perhaps my father misunderstood you—I hope he did—but he mentioned something about a condition."

She paused in some embarrassment.

"I did name a condition, Miss Parkhurst—a condition I earnestly hope you will regard with favor."

"This condition," said Mabel, determined to get through the interview as soon as possible, "this condition related to myself. You must pardon my directness, but I do not like circumlocution and wish to come to an understanding at once."

"You are quite right," said the lawyer, "and I thank you for coming to the point, and since the opportunity is afforded me, allow me to say that, though it is the first occasion of my speaking with you, I have long known and admired you."

"You have the advantage of me, sir," said Mabel with reserve.

"Yet let me hope that this will not prejudice you against me. In proposing for your hand as I did to your father, I acted from no hasty impulse, but from a well-considered determination. Think that in acceding to my request,

you not only bestow happiness upon your unworthy admirer, but also secure the restoration of your father and yourself to that sphere which is most congenial to you."

"As for myself," said Mabel, "I have no desire to leave the country home that I have found so attractive. I was never so happy in the city as I have been here."

Mabel did not analyze the sources of her happiness. Perhaps no one ever does so. But it is questionable whether Henry Davenport's presence would not have made the city more attractive than the country.

"Perhaps I was wrong with regard to yourself," said Clarke, bowing gallantly. "The country does indeed seem to be the fit abiding-place of the flowers—more especially of the rose, the queen of flowers."

Mabel listened coldly and deigned no acknowledgment of the compliment. After pausing long enough for an answer to be made if one was intended, the speaker went on: "But your father —he at least would much prefer the city?"

"He would. He has never enjoyed himself much in the country, and his happiness would doubtless be much promoted by a return to the scenes and acquaintances with which he was once familiar."

"It is fortunate, then, that this return is now

open to him," said the lawyer, looking stealthily at his fair companion.

"And how is it open to him?" asked Mabel, fixing her eyes steadily upon the lawyer.

"By his acceptance of my offer," said Clarke, not without betraying a little confusion.

"Mr. Clarke, I have come here with the intention of being entirely frank with you. The condition you have proposed is one that it is quite impossible for my father to comply with."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, for two reasons. The first is that my father, whatever other claims he may have upon me, has no authority over my hand and its disposal. I am convinced that he does not desire to have."

"But in case of your willingness," said the lawyer eagerly.

"That is out of the question," said Mabel gravely.

"Let me hope that I may prevail upon you to alter your mind. If assiduous devotion——"

"Sir, I repeat it, this is out of the question. I will not stop to discuss the question of time and its effect upon my mind. Another circumstance stands in the way, which I will not hesitate to disclose to you from motives of maidenly delicacy. Learn that my heart has been won by another, and if I marry anyone, he will be my husband."

Clarke's brow darkened.

"It is young Davenport," he said.

"How you should have arrived at this knowledge, I know not," said Mabel. "However, it saves me the trouble of my intended disclosure. You are right. It is Henry Davenport."

"But," said the lawyer insinuatingly, "when he learns that your father's happiness is involved, he will agree to surrender your hand."

Mabel's face flushed indignantly. "It might occur to him," she said sarcastically, "to inquire how far such a sacrifice would promote my father's happiness. Allow me to correct an evident misapprehension. Learn, then, that my engagement to Henry Davenport is not my only obstacle to complying with the proposal you have made. The other is insurmountable."

"I do not ask you," said the lawyer, "to marry me for love. That will come in time, and I am willing to wait for it. I am not sentimental, but I like you, and want you for my wife. I am in a condition to offer your father what he values in return. You see I have stated it as a business transaction."

"I am glad you have placed it on the right footing," said Mabel. "It will make it less embarrassing. I feel free, then, to urge you instead of my hand, that it is quite impossible for me to

grant, to accept a part of this money you say it is in your power to place in my father's hands."

"I have already signified to your father," said the lawyer coolly, "that this is a proposition which I cannot consider."

"Perhaps you think thus to force me to your terms," said Mabel, "but I may as well say that this is a sacrifice I cannot make even for my father. Take money, and you can name your own terms. Otherwise you may regard business between us as at an end."

"I should prefer that you would not make up your mind too hastily," said Dick Clarke, with an incredulous look that incensed Mabel, implying as it did doubt of the strength of her resolution. "I shall remain here some days more, and hope during that time you may reconsider your present determination."

"Good-morning, sir," said Mabel haughtily.

"What a splendid creature she is!" mused the lawyer when alone. "I like her all the better for her pride. She's offish now, but she'll come to it yet."

CHAPTER XV

LONG ARROW

At the date of our story some of the Indian tribes still occupied lands in the heart of our present civilization. The stern destiny which year by year has thrust them farther and farther away from the hunting grounds of their fathers was indeed taking shape. Already the forests had been felled, and the smoke of many a settlement rose through the clear air throughout the Eastern States, and even the eastern portion of New York had become too densely peopled for the aboriginal inhabitants. It seemed impossible for the two races to breathe the same air. But in the interior of the State the settlements were so few that remnants of the tribes yet lingered, reluctant to exchange the home whose varied and beautiful scenery had so recommended it for lands farther west, which were neither endeared to them by old association nor of so fair an outward aspect.

Among these remnants was a band of about fifty warriors who made their home near the beautiful lakes of which the Empire State is justly so proud. One of their villages was located about

ten miles from the settlement that has thus far been the scene of our story.

A space had been cleared of trees to an extent of about two hundred yards square, and here, scattered irregularly about, stood the wigwams of the tribe. In all, the village numbered not far from two hundred and fifty inhabitants, including men, women, and children.

Fortunately for the neighboring white settlement they had always been amicably disposed to the strange race who were gaining a foothold among them. Such at least was the general sentiment, although occasionally one, fiercer or gifted with greater foresight than the rest, contemplated with ill-concealed alarm and jealousy the onward sweep of European civilization.

The chief of this remnant of a tribe bore, as was usual among the Indians, a name founded upon his personal qualities. He was called Long Arrow, and the reader will of course conjecture without difficulty that the name was given in compliment to his reputation as a skillful archer. This reputation, however, rather bore reference to the past than the present, for the chief was no longer young. He had one daughter, a maiden of sixteen, who, for grace and beauty, bore off the palm among all the maidens in the village. For this reason, as well as her rank as the only daughter of the leading man in the tribe, her

hand was eagerly sought by more than one of the young men who surrounded her.

But the daughter of a chieftain was not to be lightly or easily won. Probably Waurega herself would readily have made her own choice, but her father was not only to be consulted, but expected to have the controlling voice in the matter. And Waurega being of a yielding disposition, and having a great reverence for her father, never dreamed of disputing his will.

Already he had had several applications from young men for his daughter's hand, but he had invariably answered that she was too young yet to marry. But he voluntarily promised that on Waurega's seventeenth birthday he should make the selection of his future son-in-law, and recommended them to have patience until then.

To this advice the young men submitted with the better grace, perhaps, because each one, in the plenitude either of his vanity or his hope, fancied that his own chance of success was the best. But whether or not this should prove correct, the will of the chief was law, and it was useless to think of thwarting it.

Waurega had too much of the spirit of her sex not to have some choice in the matter. Though her filial subordination was such that she did not venture to mention the subject to her father, she earnestly hoped that his choice would rest upon

a certain young man who bore the name of Okanoga. Waurega's preference certainly did her credit, for there was not in the village a more shapely and handsome youth than he. He was an adept in all manly exercises, and had approved himself in all respects an honorable and high-minded young man, and had never been charged with a base or dishonorable action.

As Waurega's seventeenth birthday approached she could not avoid speculating much and anxiously upon her father's probable choice. But upon this point she was left entirely to conjecture, since, with an Indian's habitual taciturnity, he did not choose to indicate by the slightest sign what that decision would be. But upon the evening preceding the eventful day he broke through his silence.

He had sat for an hour at the door of his lodge smoking a pipe, with that imperturbable gravity which is characteristic of an Indian. Yet occasionally his glance would stray to his daughter, who was stirring about within the lodge, attending to some domestic duty. He took care, however, not to let his daughter see that she was an object of attention, for he cautiously withdrew his glance whenever he thought that she was likely to observe it.

At length, however, he removed the pipe, and called his daughter by name.

"Waurega!"

At the sound of her name, the maiden came instantly to her father's side, and looked anxiously in his face.

"Take your seat beside me, Waurega," said the chief; "I have something for your ear."

In a graceful attitude of childlike dependence and trust Waurega sank to the ground, and rested her hand upon the knee of the chief.

"Let my father speak," she said. "His words are as music to the ear of his child."

"Thou hast ever been a good child, Waurega," said the chief, fondly stroking the luxuriant hair of his daughter.

"The heart of Waurega leaps for joy at these words from the great chief her father," said the maiden, while her face beamed with satisfaction at this unwonted commendation from her stately and taciturn parent.

"The sight of thy face in my lodge has been very pleasing to me, and thy step has been like that of a young fawn, Waureka, but the time has come when thou must leave thy father's lodge."

The young girl murmured inaudibly, and clung the closer to her parent's knees. She knew to what he referred and her heart beat faster. The next sentence, no doubt, would reveal the name of the husband whom her father had selected for her.

Would it be Okanoga? So she fervently hoped.

"Seventeen times the corn has risen and the snows have fallen," said the chief, "since Waurega came to her father's lodge. She was a child then, small and weak, and her foot, now swift like the fawn's, had no power. But now she has grown into a maiden pleasant and fair as her mother was, and the young men have asked her father to give her to them as a wife."

The chief paused, but Waurega only nestled the closer to his side and still kept silence.

"It is right that Waurega should wed," said the chief. "The Long Arrow is growing old. The young sapling has become an old tree, and the time shall come when the warriors will need a new chief. It is right that Waurega shall wed and raise up a successor to tread in the steps of the Long Arrow, and take his place at the council-board."

"Now," thought the Indian maiden, "will my father speak the name of my husband. Oh, that it may be Okanoga!"

But again she was mistaken.

"Waurega must be the wife of one who is brave and skillful. One whom Long Arrow shall not be ashamed to acknowledge as his son."

The old chief went on to explain the plan of selection which he had adopted. It was char-

acteristic, and showed that he had not forgotten his ancient skill with the bow.

In brief, he proposed to have a trial at archery, open to all the young men in the tribe, his daughter's hand being the guerdon of the victor. The trial was to take place at ten in the morning, and immediately upon the result being known the simple rites of the Indian marriage were to take place, and Waurega would at once assume the duties of a wife.

Waurega listened in silence, and not without satisfaction, for she well knew that her favorite Okanoga was skilled in the use of the bow, and she fondly anticipated that he would win the prize.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHIEF'S PROCLAMATION

When the sun was an hour high Long Arrow convoked a meeting of the young men of the tribe. There was not one that did not know the meaning of this summons, for this day had been anxiously looked forward to by more than one of them.

When all were assembled, and silence was obtained, the chief spoke.

"My children," he said, "I have called you together to choose a husband for my daughter. For seventeen summers she has grown up in the lodge of the Long Arrow, and now she is old enough to wed. Is there anyone among you that would be the husband of Waurega?"

"I! I!" shouted fifteen young men simultaneously.

The chief slowly glanced from one to another, and then his eye rested with a glance of pride upon his daughter, who stood half screened from view behind him. Despite his grave appearance, he could not help feeling proud of such a tribute to the power of his daughter's attractions.

"It is well," he said after a brief pause.

"There are many that would lead Waurega to their wigwam, but she can marry but one."

Again there was a pause, and the hearts of the young men beat now high with hope, now fast with suspense.

"I cannot give her to all," continued the chief. "I would give her to the best."

Again he paused, but after a brief silence continued, his figure swelling with conscious pride.

"You know, my children, that I am called the Long Arrow. When my form was as straight and my eye as sharp as yours, there was not a young man in the tribe who could speed his arrow farther or straighter to the mark than mine. Many a time have I loosed the shaft and brought down the bird that was swift upon the wing. Many a time has my arrow drank the heart's blood of the enemy. He that would win the daughter of Long Arrow must shoot the best arrow. I have said."

Of course it was understood that there was to be a trial of skill, and that the hand of Waurega was to be the guerdon of the victor.

Two hours were allowed for the preliminary preparations. The young contestants were anxious to see that their bows were in proper trim. They at once dispersed to their respective wigwams, and began to tighten the strings, and select

their best arrows, so that the trial might be made under the most advantageous circumstances.

Some of them had but a faint hope of success. They had been pitted against each other so many times that the particular degree of skill possessed by each was a matter of general knowledge.

Yet none wholly despaired. Accidents may happen in the best-regulated families, and even the most skillful are liable to failure. There were two, however, who had hitherto borne off the palm of archery, and who stood much the best chance of victory.

The first of these was Okanoga, the favored lover of Waurega. He heard the chief's proposal with satisfaction, for he had well-grounded confidence in his own skill. Besides he had everything to stimulate him to unwonted effort. He had glanced at the face of Waurega, and he interpreted aright the shy glance of encouragement. She wished for his success, and he determined to leave nothing undone to secure it.

The other and only formidable rival of Okanoga was the Indian introduced in the early part of this tale as Indian John, sometimes called Jack, who is destined to play quite an important part in our story. It will be remembered that he served as the guide of the lawyer when wandering bewildered in the woods. His position in the tribe was by no means so desirable as that of Oka-

noga. He had sunk into disgrace through his habits of intoxication, which had been steadily increasing upon him. His father, with stern sorrow, lamented the degradation of his son, and had often remonstrated with him, but to no purpose. John had listened sullenly, and when his father ceased speaking would stray away by himself, and whenever by any means he obtained a sum of money, it invariably found its way into the till of Hill's Tavern.

Besides the passion for drink there was one other to which John had yielded. In common with the young men of the tribe he loved the chief's daughter. Till now he had loved her hopelessly, for his conduct and degradation were such that it would have been the wildest presumption for him to dream of an alliance with the pure-minded Waurega.

But now an opportunity was presented of which he might take advantage. The competition was open to all, and by the terms no one was excluded. She was without reserve to become the wife of him who shot the best arrow. John well knew his own skill and was proud of it. The time had been when in virtue of it he held a position equal to that of his chief rival, Okanoga. For among the Indians skill and prowess universally command respect and regard. But this was before he had yielded to the baleful spirit which

had brought him down from his high estate. There were times when John became sensible of his fall, and formed the determination to abjure the tempting fiend which had caused it. But appetite again asserted its claims, and again he yielded.

But when the chief made the announcement which had created so great an excitement among the young men, a spark of the old fire kindled in the breast of John, and his step became prouder as he thought how great a change success in the approaching trial would effect in his present position. There was nothing that would so certainly restore him to the respect of his comrades, who now regarded him with ill-concealed contempt. But apart from this desirable change in the popular estimation of him, he would win the prize which so many coveted. The beautiful Waurega, daughter of the great chief, would then become his wife. He would lead her to his wigwam and henceforth become the envy of the tribe. Yes, he would try. He would do his best, and perhaps, nay, it was very possible that he would succeed.

The same thought had come to another. The father of John, though he had felt deeply the humiliation of his son, had not lost all confidence in him. When he came staggering home, his naturally good features wearing the besotted

look of a drunkard, in all his indignation and sorrow he could not help recalling the time when John stood forth among the young men prominent for his skill and strength, and a feeling of pride in the past mingled with his mortification for the present.

He, too, had not failed to recognize the importance of his son's seizing this moment to retrieve his well-nigh lost position and establish his reputation on its old foundation.

He waited for his son in the wigwam that they jointly occupied.

"Has my son heard the announcement of the chief?" he asked, fixing his eyes upon John.

"He has," was the brief reply.

"And does not his heart warm to the daughter of Long Arrow, the beautiful Waurega, whose step is light upon the turf, and whose smile is like the sunshine?"

"Waurega is very fair. Happy will be he who shall win her to enter his wigwam," replied the son.

"Is not the arrow of John as true as that of any of the young men?" said his father persuasively, using his son's English appellation.

"Does he not recall his ancient fame? Will he not strive with the young men, that perchance he may win the prize of victory? Then will the young men cease to deride him because he has

given himself up to the power of the strong fire water of the English, that has so often mocked him, and made him appear like a silly woman. Will he not turn away from it, and take the place that is his?"

"My father has spoken well," said John gravely. "I have been foolish, but now I will be wise. My arrow shall fly to the mark with those of the young men."

"It is good," said the delighted parent, who had feared that his love for drink had so far blunted the ambition of his son that he would find it difficult to lead him to his wish. "It is good. My son shall conquer. When the sun sets he shall lead the fair Waurega to his wigwam."

Cheered by this confident anticipation of his success, John sought out his bow and arrows, and examined them closely to make sure that they were in a proper state to use in so important a trial.

CHAPTER XVII

INDIAN JOHN'S DOWNFALL

UNFORTUNATELY for Indian John's chances of success, a strong temptation presented itself to him while he was engaged in preparing for the trial of skill now so near at hand.

This temptation assumed a form the most difficult for one of his nature to resist.

The day previous he had succeeded in obtaining a little money for a service rendered to one of the whites, and had as a matter of course gone to the tavern to invest in liquor. Usually he was unprovided with more than would buy what he could drink at once, but on this occasion he was better supplied. He accordingly purchased a bottleful, which he brought home with him. This bottle he had laid away, so that it might not meet the eye of his father. But as he was preparing for the trial, as luck would have it, the thought of this bottle, the contents of which were not more than half exhausted, came to him, and with it the pangs of thirst assailed him.

Should he stop a moment and quench his thirst?

Under ordinary circumstances he would have done so, but the thought that he needed a clear head and a steady hand restrained him for a moment. He knew that at his best Okanoga would be a formidable rival, who would not allow him to win the victory without a struggle. Should he be so imprudent as to endanger his aim by drinking, his rival's chances would be very greatly increased.

This was enough to make him pause. The thought of the magnitude of the stake for which he was playing, the attractive prize, and the restoration to respectability might well lead him to struggle with his craving appetite.

But inclination is never without its sophistries. After some vacillation of purpose John argued to himself that a small draught could make no difference. It might even increase his chances of success by making him feel more lively and animated.

At any rate he was resolved to test it, and accordingly laid down his bow and arrows, and made his way to the hiding-place where he had laid the bottle.

It proved to be more than half-full. John's eyes sparkled as he held it up to the light, and from that moment he resigned himself without a struggle to the power of his enslaver. He had indeed intended to drink only a little, but it was

impossible for him to control his appetite once aroused. Tipping it up, he drank and drank until the bottle was empty. Then, overcome by the strength of his potations, he sank down in a stupor with the bottle by his side.

Leaving him in this condition we shift the scene, and conduct the reader to the spot where the trial was to take place.

As already mentioned, the village was located in an open space, in the center of which were situated the buildings. Around there was a belt of land, a part of which was devoted to the limited agricultural purposes for which the Indian was known. On one side, however, it was unplanted. It was here that the trial in archery was to take place.

Of course so important an event made a great stir in the little settlement. In an Indian village, even more than in a small New England town, something of private interest becomes common property. This arises in great measure from their living so much in common. Of course, therefore, such an occurrence as a trial which should decide to whom the chief's daughter should be given was no ordinary one. Half an hour before the time arrived, the people of the village, men, women, and children, were gathered in groups at the spot where it was understood that it would take place. All the village was collected ex-

cept the young braves who were to contend for the prize. They were busily engaged in testing their bows, and fitting them for service. Among the exceptions, also, was the chief, whose dignity, as well as his own interest in the result, made it only proper that he should remain away. Last, but not least, Waurega herself, the fair subject of all these preparations, was concealed from view in her father's lodge. To her it was a momentous time. An hour would decide her destiny for life. She entertained a well-grounded hope that Okanoga would prove successful, but this was not certain. His bow might break, his arrow might be too light or too heavy, perhaps even the knowledge of the importance of the contest might act unfavorably upon him by depriving him of the coolness which such a trial eminently required. Besides, she had accidentally learned that John was about to enter the lists, and she knew too well his ancient skill not to have some apprehensions on this score. There was not one of the contestants whom she would not sooner have succeed than he. If she had not known her father so well, she might have thought that in such an event he would draw back from his engagement. But this was impossible. Long Arrow was a man of his word, and would keep it at all hazards. No doubt it would be exceedingly distasteful to him to give his daughter to one

who had so degraded himself in the estimation of the tribe, but it would be done.

Waurega, then, had some reason to feel disturbed. Her life destiny was about to be settled, and hardest of all, she must remain passive while it was being decided. There was nothing which she could do to insure the victory to the lover of her choice, otherwise than to let him know how ardently she longed for his success, and of this he was already well aware.

But the minutes were flying, and the limited time allowed to the contestants for preparation had nearly passed. As Waurega sat with downcast eyes, her mind given up to anxious speculations upon the uncertainties of her position, suddenly her father presented himself.

He was dressed in the style which he was wont to adopt on occasions of importance, and was resolved that no effort should be spared on his part to impart dignity and impressiveness to the approaching spectacle.

"Is my daughter ready to go forth and see the young men strive which shall lead her to his wigwam?"

"Need Waurega go?" asked the maiden with an appealing glance. She felt that she would prefer to remain by herself until the issue was decided, and thus be spared the anxiety of watching the varying success of the different claimants for

her hand. But this was evidently no part of her father's intention. He considered that it would not be in consonance with the proprieties of the occasion, and it is a mistake to think that the Indians, and others whom we are wont to consider more unconventional than ourselves, are really less wedded to the conventions which prevail among them than ourselves.

To Waurega's appeal, therefore, the chief answered by intimating, in a manner which could not be mistaken, that it was not only his desire, but his will that she should be present on the occasion.

Trained up to habits of implicit obedience, Waurega never thought of questioning this decision of her father's, but at once proceeded to array herself for the occasion. And here, as was not unnatural under the circumstances, a little of that admiration for finery, and a desire to appear as well as possible in the eyes of her rustic admirers, led Waurega to array herself in her best attire. She knew that she would be a general center of observation to all who were present, and she reflected with not a little complacency how much envy she would excite in the bosoms of some maidens in the tribe who felt themselves fortunate if they could secure but a single lover.

Waurega's dress would not perhaps have excited much complacency in a belle of the present

day. She had at some time become the possessor of a piece of bright red calico, obtained from the English settlement near by, which she had fashioned into a garment to suit her own taste. Around her neck she wore two separate strings of beads of different colors. Of these she was not a little proud, viewing them in the same light as a fashionable lady would her diamonds. Other parts of the attire must be left to the imagination of the reader. It is enough to say that when she presented herself to her father, and professed herself ready to go forth, he viewed her with a critical look which subsided into a glance of approbation. Moreover, the thought which she had expended upon her dress had superseded for a time the more anxious thought which the occasion was calculated to inspire.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRIAL OF SKILL

The young men who were to engage in the trial of skill were already on the ground. On a similar occasion among the whites there would doubtless have been a large amount of noise and confusion, but here, on the contrary, the most perfect decorum reigned.

The rival archers formed a group by themselves. Whatever might have been their feelings towards each other, in reference to the approaching contest, nothing appeared in their faces but that impassive look with which an Indian so successfully veils his real thoughts.

When, however, Long Arrow the chief led out Waurega, attired in her Indian finery, nature asserted itself, and a low murmur of admiration ran along the whole line. But this was immediately checked, and their attention was at once called to the purpose for which they had assembled.

For a mark, a circular section of bark had been stripped from a tree at the distance of a hundred yards. In removing the bark, however, an inner

ring had been left, and while an arrow striking anywhere within the circle would indicate fair skill, it was expected that the best archers would hit within the inner ring, in which the exact center had been marked as nearly as could be indicated. To hit this at such a distance would require a degree of skill that might well entitle the one who displayed it to the glory and the meed of victor.

All stood by, waiting for the chief to give the signal for the trial to commence.

Raising his hand to command attention, he commenced:

"My children, you have come to see which can draw the best bow. The daughter of Long Arrow is before you." Here he pointed to Waurega, who modestly cast down her eyes.

The chief proceeded to reiterate his assurance of the morning that he who came out of the approaching contest a victor should lead Waurega to his wigwam as his wife.

The signal to commence was now given, and according to previous arrangement one of the number stepped forward, and drawing his bow to the proper position, let fly the arrow.

The young man who had been appointed to lead off was of a character more frequently found among the whites than among his own nation. In other words he had a great deal of self-com-

placency with very little real merit on which to base it.

True to his character he stepped up to the place appointed, with the step of one that was confident of victory, and after a sweeping glance around him to see if he was likely to receive the attention which he coveted, he threw himself into an attitude, and after sundry preliminary flourishes, discharged his arrow as above described.

The eyes of the spectators simultaneously followed the flight of the arrow, and a laugh of derision was heard on all sides when it was found that instead of hitting the center, as the archer had boasted that he should do, it had not even struck the tree.

This utter lack of success was too much even for the self-complacent youth who had drawn the bow. He slunk back to his former place, muttering something to the effect that his bow was not in good condition.

He was quickly succeeded by the next contestant, who, taught by the humiliating failure of his predecessor that it was not well to put on airs, walked up modestly, and drew his bow with caution. His shot was a very good one, striking the inner circle of bark which had been left as above described.

The youth left the stand well pleased with his success. He did not anticipate gaining the prize,

for he well knew that there were others present who were his superiors. But he had exhibited a very commendable degree of skill, and had no reason to be ashamed of his effort.

To him succeeded another, a mere youth, who had as yet attained but the age of eighteen, and who, by courtesy alone, was admitted to the present contest. His youth precluded him from being a claimant for Waurega's hand, but he wished to have a part in the trial, in order to measure his skill with that of the rest.

His arrow struck within the outer circle, towards the rim. This too, considering the inexperience of the archer, was a creditable shot.

But it is not my purpose to narrate in detail the efforts of the contestants. The first proved to be the poorest. All struck the tree, though one failed to strike within the circle. At length one remained, and this Okanoga, who, by general consent, had been suffered to take the last place. Great as was his skill, the task which remained for him was not of the easiest. Two of those who had preceded him had struck within the inner circle, one very near the center. The success of the last had struck Waurega with sudden terror. Her own training had taught her that the shot was an admirable one. What increased her apprehension was the personal dislike which she entertained towards the one thus successful.

It was with a glance unconsciously appealing that she looked at Okanoga as he approached the stand.

The young man's air was cool and composed. His step was elastic, and he did not appear to fear for the result. He appeared strikingly handsome as he stood in an attitude of careless grace with one foot placed a little before the other. More than Waurega looked upon him as the Adonis of the tribe, and more than one would have been glad to win him from the chief's daughter. So among the maidens it was generally hoped that he would be unsuccessful in the present trial, as he would then be obliged to seek another bride. The men in the tribe, except those personally interested, were, on the contrary, hopeful of his success. But all, whatever might be their feelings, watched with the greatest interest the appearance of this last champion, whose good or ill success would decide the question.

Though not flustered, Okanoga evidently felt the responsibility of his position. With a fair reliance upon his own ability, he was by no means inclined to a rash confidence. He therefore exercised the utmost care in taking aim; with his keen eye he fixed upon the central spot, and aimed for that. His arrow was discharged amid the greatest excitement on the part of the spectators. A moment of suspense, and quickly cleav-

ing the air, it struck, and quivered in the target's very center.

There was a loud murmur of applause, in which some even of the disappointed joined. They applauded the shot rather than the archer. When the question was thus settled, Okanoga drew aside, and lifting his eyes to the face of the chief, modestly waited for him to speak.

By a gesture the chief signified to the young man to advance.

He took the hand of his unresisting daughter and said: "I have seen the bow of Okanoga, and it is strong. I marked the flight of his arrow, and it was swift. It struck the mark. Okanoga's arrow is the best. Let him lead the daughter of the chief to his wigwam——"

The heart of Okanoga beat high with exultation, and his eye sparkled with joy, as he took the proffered hand and led away the embarrassed but happy Waurega.

Meantime a different scene was enacting in another wigwam.

John had not made his appearance among the contestants. His father's eye scanned anxiously the ranks of the young men, and he could not see him. His heart sank within him, for he had set his heart upon his son's embracing this chance of winning back his lost reputation.

It occurred to him, however, that he might be

preparing his bow. But when one after another stepped up and discharged his arrow, the father became uneasy, and stole away from the crowd, taking his way to his own wigwam.

He had scarcely entered when the cause of his son's absence was revealed to him. Prostrate he lay upon the floor in the stupor of intoxication, with the bottle at his side.

A stern anguish settled upon the face of the father, but without disturbing his son he went back to the scene of the contest, and watched the remainder of the proceedings, outwardly calm, but with an aching heart.

But during this time he had taken his resolution, which he only waited for the conclusion of the trial to carry into execution.

CHAPTER XIX

FATHER AGAINST SON

THE iron had entered deeply into the soul of the shamed and indignant Indian father. In proportion as he had been proud of the skill and promise of his son, he felt a like sorrow at the bitter disappointment of his most cherished hopes. He remembered the fondness with which he had watched the youthful gambols of his child—dearer to him because an only son, his first and last born. He remembered how even then he felt proud of the boy's superiority to his playfellows, and looked forward with hope to his assuming by right of merit a place in the tribe second only to that of the chief. There came back to him a hundred trifles—yet no trifles in a father's remembrance—on which he had dwelt fondly when his son was yet in the freshness of his untainted youth, ere he had bowed his knee to the idol which the whites had set up to lure their people to destruction.

Even after he began to develop the fatal taste that had become so strong, he hoped for the best; that his son would break away from the unworthy

habit which was sapping the foundations of his manhood, and once more walk erect in all the consciousness of his strength and superiority over his fellows.

But now these hopes were forever at an end. John had resisted the strongest inducement which could possibly be brought to bear upon him. He had had it in his power at one bound to vault back into his wonted place. Reputation and affection alike combined to bid him put under his feet the serpent which enthralled him. But notwithstanding all these motives to conquer his appetite, if only a short time, he had ignominiously fallen a victim to the bottle. The father felt that this decided the matter. After this his son's reformation was no longer to be hoped. For the remainder of his life he was destined to wear the degrading chains of the enslaver, bringing disgrace upon himself, upon his father, and upon his tribe.

This thought was bitter in the extreme to the proud old man. A spirit akin to that of the Roman father rose in his heart, and he resolved to take a step which only utter despair could prompt; that he would take away that life which, if spared, would be spent in such humiliating subjection. No longer should the smile of derision appear on the faces even of the children, when his son staggered home in helpless inebriety. It

would be a grievous thing to be childless by his own act, but he saw no alternative. He did not stop to regard the consequences to himself. Probably they would not be serious, parental authority being greater among the Indians than with the whites, and he would be regarded as having acted not without some provocation; but even if the act were to be followed by his own death, this consideration would not have stayed his hand. He was an Indian and had all the Indian contempt of death. The assertion and protection of his own honor he looked upon as of much more moment than the question of life.

Long did the father ponder in bitterness of soul on his son's degradation before he came to this resolution. Having formed it, he took his way slowly to his lodge, where he found his son as when he last saw him, lying upon the earthen floor with the bottle beside him. His eyes were closed, and his stupor was not yet over.

The father gave one glance at him, and then walked to the corner where he was accustomed to keep his tomahawk.

He lifted the weapon, and stood for a moment gazing thoughtfully upon it. To him it brought back a thousand recollections of incidents in the field and on the war-path. With it he had cleft the skull of a chief of the Seminoles, and many a less noted foe had bit the dust under its venge-

ful blow. By it he had won all his fame as a doughty warrior. But now his step had become slow, and his eye had lost its wonted keenness. His arm retained a portion only of its ancient strength. He was one of the old men now, would go forth no more on the war-path. His tomahawk had been laid aside, and he had thought to use it no more. The time was when he had intended to bequeath it to his son, telling him at the same time of the brave execution which it had wrought, and exhorting him not to fall behind his father's fame. But the time for such thoughts was over. His son had proved recreant. He had tarnished his father's honorable fame, and he had reserved it as the last and crowning work of this, his trusty companion in a hundred skirmishes, to put an end to the life of his son.

The old man lifted the weapon stained with the blood it had shed, and strode to the side of his son.

He had thought his resolution firm, but as he looked down upon the form at his feet his stern purpose wavered.

The face of his son assumed to him, it might have been his imagination preternaturally active at that time, which suggested it, but he fancied he saw a startling resemblance in the expression to the mother now for ten years dead, and whom

he had loved with an intensity not common among his people.

Then the thought arose: It was her son as well as his that he was about to slay. When they met in the happy hunting grounds, would she not reproach him? This thought called up others which appealed to the paternal tenderness with which he had once regarded his only child, and which, in spite of the latter's shortcomings, was only slumbering, and not wholly lost.

Twice he raised the tomahawk, and twice he let his arm fall to his side—his resolution each time giving way.

It was at this moment that John opened his eyes.

He was so far recovered from the effects of his intoxication as to regard with astonishment the aspect and attitude of his father.

"What would my father do?" he asked, hardly comprehending the real purpose of his father.

"What has his son done?" demanded the father bitterly. "Has he not brought shame to the lodge of his father, and made himself to be laughed at by the women and the boys?"

"Who laughs at John?" demanded the young man, with a touch of his ancient fierceness. "Show him to me, and my knife shall drink his blood."

HE EXERCISED THE UTMOST CARE IN TAKING AIM.—P. 155.

The father laughed a bitter, mocking laugh.

"John has sold himself to the English for their fire water. He is no longer a man. He has become a woman. Once he could shoot, but he can do so no more. All the young men shoot better than he."

"It is a lie!" said the son fiercely.

Strangely enough, the father seemed to look with stern joy upon these ebullitions of his son's anger. Had he meekly acquiesced in the reproaches, his heart would have hardened against him, and he might yet have carried out his purpose. But he recognized in the young man's impatience a remnant of the ancient spirit which he feared had died out in his heart.

He continued: "The young men tried their bows to see which should shoot the best arrow, and lead the daughter of the chief to his wigwam. All the young men were there, but John was not there. He did not dare to shoot against the young men—for he is not a warrior, he is only a dog."

The breath of the young man came fast, and he glared at his father with a look of determined hostility.

"John is not a dog. He is a great brave," he muttered sullenly.

His father laughed in derision.

"He is a dog, a drunken dog," he reiterated.

"Let him go and live among dogs. The lodge of his father is no longer for him. His father casts him out—his tribe casts him out. Let him go where he will."

The young man cast an anguished look at his father. This was a measure which he had not contemplated; to be cast out in this way was the deepest humiliation.

"Does my father mean what he says?" he asked, unwilling to believe without further confirmation what had first been uttered.

"He is a father no longer—he has no son, for his son has become a stranger to him."

John heard this sentence of banishment with feelings of dismay and grief, but he was too proud to expostulate with his father, or seek a reversal of the sentence. With that proud resignation which is characteristic of an Indian he merely replied: "It is good. John has no father."

Then, staggering to his feet, he left the wigwam with a gait slightly unsteady and, without looking back, took his way to the forest.

His father looked after him with an anguished spirit, and a feeling of loneliness and desolation settled down upon him. But he was glad that he had not obeyed his first impulse and taken his son's life.

CHAPTER XX

THE LAWYER IS PUT UNDER BONDS

When Indian John left his father's wigwam he well understood that the sentence that had been passed upon him was no mere impulsive act upon his parent's part, which might be revoked at the end of a few hours, but was final. Henceforth he was left to shift for himself. He must make up his mind what course to pursue. He could not hope to rejoin his tribe. They would undoubtedly sustain his father in the course he had adopted. Besides, in spite of his degradation, he had too much pride to wish reconciliatory terms that would no doubt involve humiliation to himself.

So far as the supply of his necessities was concerned he felt no alarm. He had his bow and arrows with him, and the woods would supply him with game.

As he had eaten nothing since morning, he felt the necessity of immediately looking out for some game. He had now so far recovered from the effects of his potation that he could trust himself to shoot without the apprehension of failing from an unsteady hand.

As if in answer to the call of his necessity a noble deer sped by him not five minutes after he had commenced looking about him. With the rapidity of one accustomed to its use, John raised his bow, and adjusting the arrow with celerity, sped it on its death-dealing way. The hunter's aim was unerring. The shaft overtook and brought low the noble game.

The Indian was advancing on his prey when a sharp sound was heard, and the convulsive movement of the deer testified that a second weapon had done its work. He was at once the victim of the red man's bow and the white man's musket.

A moment afterward the one who had discharged the musket came through the bushes.

It proved to be Dick Clarke, who was spending the time he was compelled to wait for the expected favorable decision from Mabel in such recreation as the woods afforded.

He had considered it a piece of great good fortune when he got upon the track of the deer, never having had the luck to shoot one, and being desirous of bearing it home as a trophy.

He had not suspected the agency of the Indian in the death of the deer till, in making his appearance, he found John kneeling beside it, as it lay in its last gasp at the foot of a tree.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "it appears to me, my

good friend, that you are making pretty free with my game."

The Indian looked up in surprise, but did not offer to stir from his place.

"Don't you understand me? I tell you that the animal is mine—the victim of my bow and spear, as the Scriptures have it."

In reply the Indian pointed significantly to his arrow which he had just drawn from the deer, as was evident from the blood still adhering to it.

"You smeared it with blood from the musket wound," said Clarke suspiciously.

"John shot it—here," said the Indian, pointing out the place where his arrow had struck and penetrated the deer.

"Zounds," said the lawyer, chop-fallen. "I don't know but you did have a share in it—but don't you see that wound would never have killed the deer? You would have lost it after all, if my musket ball hadn't come in to finish the work."

John, who understood the drift of the remark, evidently did not assent to the lawyer's view, but still insisted that the deer was his own.

Dick Clarke had no especial use for the deer. It had no value to him beyond furnishing an evidence of his success as a sportsman. It was only natural for him to be proud of his first game, and he had imagined for himself quite a triumph in

carrying it into the village. But John's claim interfered fatally with his intention. Though he might plume himself on killing the deer, there was no especial glory in being its joint slayer, especially when, as John contended, it had already been brought to the ground when he fired at it. To urge a claim under such circumstances, if known, would only subject him to ridicule, as he could very well imagine.

In this state of things it occurred to him to effect a compromise with the Indian, which he thought he might readily do by the judicious use of a little money.

So he broached the subject by saying, "Come, John, you don't want this deer."

The Indian asserted doggedly that it was rightfully his, and that he would have it.

"But," urged the wily lawyer, "if you will let me have it, and I admit that it is yours, I will give you some silver which will be worth a great deal more to you than the deer."

This was an argument the Indian understood. He had already learned the great value of money by his intercourse with the whites. He knew that his favorite drink could be obtained on more favorable terms for this than in the way of barter, and as this was the intended destination of the deer, he might as well accept the white man's proffer.

"How much?" he asked sententiously.

The lawyer brought forth his wallet, and opening it, drew out a silver dollar.

This he held up in his hand, and turning to John, said: "You shall have this if you will let me have the deer and say nothing of having shot it. Do you agree?"

But the lawyer had, in his eagerness, committed an error from which the caution taught him in his profession ought to have saved him.

In opening his pocket-book he incautiously displayed a part of the contents. These included a number of gold pieces that were plainly revealed to the Indian.

Now John was so far versed in the usages of the whites as to be aware of the greatly superior value of gold to silver. Here was a strong temptation for him. He knew that the gold he saw would buy him many gallons of rum. It might keep him supplied for months. Besides this it would buy him a lodging or a dinner whenever he chose. It need hardly be said that he was little bound by moral considerations touching the abstract rectitude or iniquity of the act by which, if at all, he must become possessed of the object which he coveted.

While Dick Clarke was holding out the dollar to tempt him to the bargain, the Indian was rapidly making up his mind what to do.

By a sudden and on the lawyer's part wholly unforeseen movement, he snatched the pocket-book from his grasp, pinioned Clarke's arms with one of his own, and drawing forth a strong cord, proceeded to tie him hand and foot.

Of course this was not effected without resistance. But the lawyer was no match in strength for the athletic young Indian. Besides he was taken suddenly, and at a disadvantage. There was one weapon of offense which he freely used, however, and that was his tongue. He berated the Indian in the most forcible terms which his vocabulary could supply him, and among these were some which it may be advisable not to transfer to these pages.

But for words the Indian cared not. He proceeded swiftly and dexterously in his task, and in the space of a minute the lawyer was lying bound hand and foot side by side with the quarry which he coveted.

Having possessed himself of the pocket-book, John paid no regard to the deer, but went on his way, leaving the lawyer filled with rage and vexation.

"What a confounded fool I was to show him the pocket-book!" he muttered, vexed with his own imprudence. "I deserve all this. There were over a hundred dollars in that pocket-book, and, good Heavens!"—the lawyer started in

affright as this new misfortune flashed upon him—"good Heavens! only this morning I put into it that fatal letter. If by any chance it should fall into the hands of the Parkhursts or young Davenport, my fortune is lost beyond redemption! I could shoot that Indian with a good relish. If I could only free myself from these cords!"

The lawyer little suspected to what angel of consolation he was to be indebted for his release from bonds.

In snatching the lawyer's pocket-book Indian John had acted from a sudden impulse. He understood that this daring outrage would compel him to leave the neighborhood, but for this he cared little. In fact, that was a step on which he had already determined and which would require no sacrifice on his part. It would be disagreeable after his formal expulsion to meet the members of his own tribe, as he must do if he continued to roam these woods.

When he had placed a half-mile between himself and his victim, who lay writhing in his bonds, he proceeded to open the pocket-book, and with some curiosity began to examine the contents.

These consisted of the gold already mentioned, a small sum in silver, and various papers.

Among these was the note that conveyed the

valuable information relating to the hidden treasure!

John took out the gold and silver and deposited it in his own pouch. The papers he evidently held of little account, for with a contemptuous gesture he took them out, and threw them upon the ground. His attire not supplying him with that convenient receptacle a pocket, he threw down the pocket-book also, and then, with a self-satisfied look, he turned his face to the north.

CHAPTER XXI

A BOY AND A BEAR

On the same day that Richard Clarke fell afoul of Indian John in the woods Jerry obtained permission to go fishing at Lake Cassalet, four miles distant from the Parkhurst home.

At this lake the boy felt he would make a much larger haul than from the pond near the house, and he was, consequently, much elated over the prospect.

"I'll bring you some big fish this time, Mehitable," he said, while preparing his lines and bait.

"You take care that you don't fall into the hands of some of the good-for-nothing Indians," returned the spinster.

"Humph! do you think I am afraid of the Indians?" retorted Jerry.

"Well, you had better be. They are not always so peaceable as you think they are."

"I don't believe the Indians would dare to touch me, Hitty. They know well enough that if they did all the settlers would be up in arms against them."

"Do you think the settlers are going to put

themselves out for you?" asked the spinster tartly.

"Don't you think they'd do something if the Indians captured you?" asked Jerry.

"Well, that's a different thing."

"I don't see it."

"They always try to protect a young lady, Jerry Blue."

At this Jerry gave a low whistle.

"Say, Hitty, how would you like to have a tall, nice-looking Indian run off with you?" he went on presently.

"Ugh! Don't mention it."

"You'd make a fine squaw, don't you think so?"

"No, I don't."

"And think of living in a wigwam these hot nights. Wouldn't it be fine!"

"Jerry Blue, you are nothing but a born tease. Now clear out with you, or I'll douse you with hot water."

"Then you wouldn't marry an Indian? Too bad. I heard two of the chiefs were after you. One of 'em is rich. He's got three wives already."

"If you don't go, you'll get that water sure!" burst out the spinster, and reached for the dipper, and as the pot of boiling water was conveniently close, Jerry disappeared immediately.

It was an ideal day for any sort of sport, and Jerry was as full of good humor as the lawyer had been when starting out for the deer. He knew the trail well and did not hesitate once while making his way to the distant lake. Only once did he stop while on his journey—to watch the antics of several chipmunks. He tried to bring one down with a stone, but the shot was unsuccessful.

His path lay within half a mile of the Indian village where the trial at archery had occurred. On several occasions the boy had stopped at the village, once on an errand for Mr. Parkhurst, and then again to buy some fancy feathers for Mabel, but never had the red men offered him any harm. It was a period when the Indians and whites were at perfect peace.

At last the distant lake was reached, and finding a spot he knew was good for fishing, Jerry settled down to the sport in earnest. He had brought along what he considered was the best bait for his purpose, and soon his catch justified his judgment.

"Wish Mr. Davenport was along," he mused, after he had brought in his fifth fish. He knew that Henry Davenport enjoyed fishing very much. The two had gone out frequently, but now Mabel claimed all of the young man's spare time.

Since the talk with Mabel, Jerry had heard nothing further concerning Dick Clarke or the

missing money. The boy had expected to learn something about the girl's visit to the tavern, but Mabel remained silent.

"I hope she doesn't change her mind and marry that man, anyway," thought Jerry. "If she does that, what will Mr. Davenport do? I'm half of a mind to tell him what's in the wind. Perhaps he can get hold of this lawyer and make him tell where the box of gold is."

But the boy had given his promise to Mabel, and it was not in his make-up to break his word.

Fishing was so good that in less than two hours Jerry had as much of a mess as he cared to carry home. He strung them all on a forked tree twig, and then put them on some bushes out of the sun.

Jerry had brought a lunch with him and now he devoted his attention to the bread, meat, and doughnuts with an avidity that proved his appetite had lost none of its vigor. As he ate he looked over the lake and toward a little island not over two hundred feet from the shore.

"Wonder what's on the island?" he asked himself. "Perhaps there are some fine birds' nests there. Guess I'll swim over and take a look."

The swim was indulged in immediately after the last of the doughnuts had disappeared.

Jerry felt perfectly at home in the water, and the fact that the lake was very deep in certain spots did not disturb him. He took a plunge and

swam around a bit near shore, and then struck out boldly for the island.

The island was less than three hundred feet square, so it did not take the boy long to walk around and over it. It was covered with a scanty growth of bushes and trees and in some places the rocks were so sharp he had to be careful for fear of cutting his feet. He found only two nests and both of these were empty. Birds were there in plenty, but they took good care to keep out of his reach.

Coming to the shore of the island, Jerry sat down to rest before returning to the mainland. He had scarcely seated himself when he let out a low cry of astonishment and leaped up again.

On the shore beyond stood a big black bear. The bear had been sniffing at his clothing, which lay in a heap on the grass. Now bruin was turning his attention to the string of fish resting on the bushes.

"Well, I declare!" murmured Jerry with his eyes as big as saucers. "A bear! Oh, my! and I haven't even a pistol, much less a gun!"

For fully a minute the bear sniffed at the fish and then bit into the largest of the catch. It was evidently to his taste, and soon he was feeding as contentedly as if the haul was his own.

"That's what I call ill manners," said Jerry to himself. "He's going to rob me of my fish, and

for all I know he'll rob me of my clothes, too. Wonder what I had best do?"

Jerry knew that bears do not care to swim if they can help it, and he contemplated the stretch of water between himself and the animal with great satisfaction. Then he picked up a sharp stone, took careful aim, and let drive.

As we already know, Jerry was not usually a good marksman. But the object aimed at was large, and now good fortune attended his move. The bear received the stone directly in the left ear. The animal let out a roar of pain and rage and dropped the fish instantly.

"Hi! drop those fish!" roared Jerry, and let fly another stone. This struck the bear in the back, and with a snort the beast turned and went crashing into the forest and out of sight.

CHAPTER XXII

JERRY MAKES A FIND

JERRY was naturally a cautious boy and he did not at once return to the mainland.

"That bear may be in hiding, ready to pounce on me the minute I land," he thought. "Just guess I'll rest here a bit and see if he comes back."

Jerry waited for half an hour, and then, seeing or hearing nothing further of the animal, swam cautiously across the water once more. On landing it did not take him long to don his clothes. He examined the fish, to find that three had disappeared down the bear's maw.

"It's not so bad as it might have been," he reasoned. "But, oh, if only I had had a gun and had hit him in the ear with a bullet instead of that stone! It would have been better than bringing down that deer I was after the day I peppered that lawyer's hat."

Jerry did not mean to let the bear deprive him of his fish and so threw in his line once more. For a while he got no bite, but presently he drew up a fish, and four others followed in rapid succession.

"There, that makes up for what I lost," he told himself. "Now it's time I got home, or else they won't let me come this far again. There are a pile of chores to be done before sundown."

With his catch in one hand and his fishing outfit in the other, he turned back toward the Parkhurst house. As he advanced deeper and deeper into the woods he keep a keen lookout for the bear. But the animal did not show himself, preferring, doubtless, to keep out of the way of one who could give him as much pain in the ear as he was now suffering.

There were two routes to and from the lake, and in returning home Jerry took that which was different from the one first pursued. By this means, unknown to himself, he crossed the trail of Indian John, at the exact spot where the worthless red man had confiscated the money in Dick Clarke's pocket-book.

As Jerry strode forward, a shaft of light, striking through the tree, illuminated the spot where the pocket-book rested, so the boy could not help but see the article in question.

"A pocket-book!" he exclaimed. "Well, I'm in luck this time for sure. I wonder whether there's much in it?"

Dropping his outfit and his fish, he seized the pocket-book and turned it open.

"Plague take it, just my luck!" he exclaimed,

in chagrin. "Not a penny in it!" He turned the object over. "Wonder who it belongs to? Hullo, here's a name, Richard Clarke. So it belongs to the lawyer who is trying to make Miss Mabel and her father so much trouble. Now, did he throw it away, or did somebody rob him of it?"

At this point Jerry espied the papers and letters on the ground, and picked them up one after another. His curiosity was aroused, and he read everything with great care.

The majority of the documents were of small importance, but the last paper he perused interested him beyond measure. It was the document left by Mabel's grandfather regarding the hidden box of gold.

"Hurrah! here's the bottom of that mystery!" he cried joyfully. "This is the secret that Mr. Richard Clarke was keeping from Miss Mabel and the squire. Said he must either be allowed to marry Mabel or else he'd keep the money for himself, did he? Well, I guess he'll do nothing of the kind now. He's a rascal if ever there was one, and I'd like nothing better than to outwit him, and that's just what I am going to do, too!"

Jerry was reading the letter over a second time when, on looking along the trail, he saw Henry Davenport approaching on horseback.

"Hullo! Mr. Davenport," he murmured.

"Wonder if I hadn't better tell him about this? Miss Mabel wanted me to keep mum, but Mr. Davenport ought to know what a rascal Richard Clarke is. Perhaps I had better sound him first."

"Well, Jerry, how are you to-day?" said Henry Davenport, coming closer. "Been fishing, I see. A nice mess truly."

"How do you do, Mr. Davenport?" returned the boy. "Say, have you seen that man from the tavern around here, that Mr. Richard Clarke?"

"No, I have not. Jerry, what do you think of him?" questioned the young man in return.

"I think he's a rascal," was the prompt answer.

"You do?"

"Yes, I do."

"What do you know about him?" asked Henry Davenport, a little surprised that Mabel should have made a confidant of the youth before him.

Thinking there might be something which he did not know, and desirous of verifying the truth or falsity of this suspicion, Jerry began to show reserve, and thrusting the important paper slyly into his breast pocket, answered: "Well, I don't know as I know all that's going on, but I know something that you and Miss Mabel and the squire too would be glad to know."

"Indeed!" said Henry Davenport eagerly. "What is it? Tell me at once."

But Jerry was too old a bird to be so quickly caught.

"After all," he said meditatively, "I can't tell whether you will care much for it unless I know the circumstances about this fellow over to the tavern."

"Pshaw, Jerry!" said Davenport impatiently, "it wouldn't interest you much. Just tell me what it is that you have found out."

"I guess," said Jerry shrewdly, "that what I've found out wouldn't interest you much, so I guess I won't say anything about it."

"I see," said the young man, "that you are a sharp boy, and I must give up to you. You must know then, that Mabel and myself have made up our minds to—to——"

"Hitch teams," suggested Jerry with an intelligent nod.

"Well, perhaps that will express it," said the young man, smiling, "but unfortunately for our purpose this lawyer has the presumption to aspire to Mabel's hand also."

"Why don't she tell him to clear out and go about his business?"

"Unfortunately he has in his possession a secret of a most important character which he uses to influence the mind of Mr. Parkhurst, who

is so discomposed thereby that Mabel is also made unhappy."

"You don't happen to know what the secret is about?" said Jerry in a very suggestive tone.

"I see, my boy, you will allow no half-way confidences," said Davenport, laughing. "I might as well be frank and tell you the whole. It appears, then, that Mr. Parkhurst inherited only half of his father's property—and that half, as you know, he lost through his misfortunes in business."

"What became of the rest?" questioned Jerry, who of course knew all about it, but for certain reasons of his own desired to learn how much the young man knew about it.

"That is just what *we* don't know and this fellow does. We only know that Mr. Parkhurst's father was afraid his property would be taken away from him during the war, and accordingly converted half of his wealth into gold, and concealed it. He left a letter behind, disclosing the place of concealment, but this letter his son never received or even saw. By some unlucky accident it fell into the hands of this fellow Clarke, who keeps it to himself, and uses it with Mr. Parkhurst as a means of obtaining his consent to wed Mabel."

"How much money was there?" asked Jerry.

"Fifty thousand dollars!"

"Crackey! That would make a pile, wouldn't it? I say, it would be worth something to get hold of that letter."

"Yes, I would give something if I could once set eyes on it."

"You would?"

"Of course I would. But how queerly you act this morning. What have you been taking?"

"A little exercise," said Jerry demurely. "But, I say, how much would you give?"

"Five hundred dollars!" said the young man, more for the sake of satisfying Jerry with an answer than from any other reason.

"Then, Mr. Davenport, I guess I'll take it now," said the boy, pulling out the paper from its place of concealment.

"What's that?" demanded Henry Davenport in surprise.

"Just read it, and I guess you'll find it all right," said Jerry.

It was read with emotions of joyful surprise.

"Jerry, you're an angel of good tidings!" the young man exclaimed, clasping the boy's hand warmly in his.

"Thank you for your favorable opinion," said Jerry, his eyes sparkling with merriment. "I'm rather badly off for wings, considering I'm an angel, and I guess you had better let me have the money, so that I can buy a new pair."

His companion laughed. "I won't forget you, Jerry," he said, "but let us go to the house, and tell Mabel and her father of this welcome discovery."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FAIR DELIVERER

NOTHING could well be imagined more aggravating than the lawyer's situation. To lie upon the ground in a cramped position, with one's limbs confined by a strong cord, can hardly be considered agreeable. But when you add to this that the prospect of deliverance is very uncertain, and that, while so confined, future plans of advantage are in imminent danger of being knocked on the head, it may well be conceived that there are other situations which may be considered preferable.

Such as I have described was the position of the lawyer.

"That confounded Indian!" he exclaimed, smarting with the pain of the cord. "I could shoot him with a good relish. If he had only left me the paper, I would not have minded the money so much, but it is torture to lie here, not knowing how much mischief he may do."

After a time he became less desponding, and reflected that, after all, things were not quite as bad as they might have been. The mere pos-

session of the paper was nothing to him. It was only important that it should not fall into the hands of others who might make use of it, and especially of those to whom it rightfully belonged. Now, the presumption was that John, who did not know how to read, would destroy the papers contained in the pocket-book as of no value to himself, and as likely, if discovered in his possession, to bring him into trouble. If he destroyed them, well and good. No evil would result to the lawyer, and the secret would still be his.

Dick Clarke, who was of a sanguine temperament, gradually worked himself into the conviction that this was what was most likely to happen. Thus his trouble of mind was somewhat diminished, although his bodily discomfort remained. But his deliverer, although he knew it not, was even now at hand.

Not to protract the reader's suspense, let me say that Mehitable had come out into the woods in search of some peculiar kind of herb which was a sovereign remedy for rheumatism, from the ruthless attacks of which she sometimes suffered.

The spinster had from the first been favorably impressed with the lawyer's appearance. She had indulged a hope that his opinion of herself was not less favorable. She had observed nothing likely to lead her to suppose that Mabel was the object of his attentions. Besides she knew

that an attachment existed between Harry Davenport and her young mistress, and this was sufficient to prevent her imagining that the lawyer's stay in the village had anything to do with Mabel.

This delusion of hers was encouraged by Jerry, who in the spirit of roguery enjoyed the affected bashfulness and confusion assumed by Mehitable when spoken to on the subject. By his continual teasing he had done much to keep alive in her the hope that her destiny was at hand, and that erelong she would return to New York with the lawyer as his bride.

In fact it was with this pleasing subject that Mehitable's thoughts were occupied when chance led her to the immediate neighborhood of the prisoner.

His quick eyes detected her approach, and recognizing her at once, he called out loudly.

"Who calls me?" asked the spinster in a voice tremulous with affright, for it was the fear of her life that the Indians would some day carry her off, though it would be hard to tell what object they could have in the abduction.

Afraid that she would leave him in her alarm, and so deprive him of the present chance of escape, the lawyer cried: "Don't be afraid. It is only I, Richard Clarke, the lawyer. Surely you know me!"

For the first time discovering her supposed lover and his situation, Mehitable clasped her hands, and feeling that the words would be excused in her surprise, exclaimed, "Dear, dear Mr. Clarke, how came you so cruelly tied?"

"It was that rascally Indian," said the lawyer suddenly.

"Is the Indian here?" asked Mehitable, showing a disposition to fly. "I don't dare to stay. I shall be carried off and made to marry one of the copper-colored wretches. Oh, oh, I know I shall."

"I don't think you need be alarmed on that score," said Clarke, a little dryly. "Besides there are none near. It was only one that overpowered me, and he would not have succeeded if he had not taken me unexpectedly. It was the rascal who goes by the name of Indian John."

"I'd like to tear his eyes out," said Mehitable with proper indignation.

"You had better untie these cords," said the lawyer, not appreciating her warm advocacy of his cause.

Mehitable stooped down, and with the coy look of a young girl essayed to unloose the fastenings. But on a sudden, when she had about half completed her task, she stopped short, and looked unutterably bashful.

"What's the matter? Can't you untie it?" asked Clarke.

"It wasn't that," said Mehitable.

"What was it, then? I wish you'd be kind enough to make haste, for it is rather painful, feeling the strain of these cords."

"I—I was thinking that we were alone," said Mehitable bashfully.

"And suppose we are—what then?" inquired Clarke in great surprise.

"I was thinking that if I untied you—you might go and—and—being a great deal stronger than I am—might go and kiss me, and I couldn't help myself."

"Can anything exceed the folly of this ridiculous old maid?" thought Clarke impatiently. "I must even humor her folly."

"But I promise you on my honor," he said emphatically, "that you have nothing to fear from me."

Mehitable would have been better pleased with some gallant demonstration, but was determined not to yield the point yet.

"And you'll excuse me for calling you dear Mr. Clarke?" she said, veiling her face with her handkerchief.

"I didn't hear you call me so."

"But I did," said Mehitable candidly. "It was in the surprise of first beholding you in this

distressed condition that I addressed you in that manner—you won't take advantage of it, will you, Mr. Clarke?"

The lawyer assured her very emphatically that she had nothing whatever to fear from him, and urged her to complete the work of his deliverance.

This she at length did, but while doing so favored him with some reminiscences of the lover whom she had rejected, and who in consequence, as she darkly intimated, had found existence too grievous a burden to bear.

"Then why didn't you marry him?" asked Clarke bluntly.

"Because I could not give him the trusting affections of my young and unsophiscated heart," said Mehitable setimentally. "I have since seen those—that is, I have seen one—who I think I might learn to love."

"Indeed, who is it?"

"Do not ask me, Mr. Clarke. It is a secret which I can never speak to the ear of anyone—least of all to you."

"And why not to me?" demanded the lawyer.

"Because—oh, Mr. Clarke, do not ask me any more questions, for I might reveal the state of my heart, and indeed I must not."

"Zounds, if I don't believe she's in love with me," said Clarke to himself. "In that case I certainly won't press the old girl to make what

might prove to be rather an awkward revelation."

"Won't you come to the house?" asked Mehitable.

"Thank you," said Clarke, "I shall not trouble to do so just now. I must follow on the track of that confounded Indian who has served me such a miserable trick."

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Mehitable, clasping her hands. "For my sake, don't! He will kill and scalp you, and I—we all should miss you so much."

"Thank you," said Clarke, slightly smiling, "but I apprehend no danger—I shall now be on my guard. I am much obliged to you for acting as my deliverer, and must now bid you good-morning."

"I wonder if he loves me!" thought the spinster. "What a beautiful man he is! I don't know but it is my duty to marry him if he asks me. If I can see that it is my duty, I will submit without a murmur."

Meanwhile Dick Clarke searched until he found the pocket-book lying in the path. There were no papers to be seen, Jerry having carried away the whole.

"The Indian has undoubtedly destroyed them," thought Clarke. "In that case, matters are not so bad as they might be."

CHAPTER XXIV

MABEL AND HER FATHER

MR. PARKHURST was not a man of strong mind or strong feelings. When he was angry or disturbed, instead of blazing out in a sudden fit of passion he indulged himself and annoyed others by a fit of sullen gloom, or peevish irritability, during the continuance of which it was quite impossible for anyone to please him.

It was in this way that he revenged himself for his daughter's firm determination not to sacrifice herself to Clarke for the sake of restoring her father to the position he coveted.

Without directly reproving her for this resolve, he showed by his manner that he was disappointed and offended with her for her refusal.

For example, at the breakfast-table one morning, Mabel asked her father if she should not pass him the plate of biscuit.

He responded with a deep sigh, "No, I have no appetite."

"Are you unwell?"

"I shall be soon if the mind has any effect upon the body," said Mr. Parkhurst gloomily.

"WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT, THEN?" HE ASKED TRIUMPHANTLY, DISPLAYING THE PAPER.—P. 201.

Mabel was silent, well knowing to what her father referred.

"I feel that this life is wearing upon me," he continued in a melancholy tone. "My temperament and my tastes unfit me for living in the wilderness. There is not a moment when the city and the old life I led there are out of my mind."

"Don't you think you would enjoy yourself better if you went about more?" asked Mabel. "There are some very pleasant families about here."

"I have no spirits to go out," said the parent. "I should only carry gloom wherever I went."

"You think so now, father, but I think you would find your spirits imperceptibly rising."

"You know nothing about it, child. It may do for you who are young and can adapt yourself to new scenes, but for me it is impossible. I am like an old tree which has been violently torn up by the roots and removed to an incongenial soil. As it will inevitably die, so I look forward to but a short time spent in wretchedness, after which death will come as a happy release."

"Do not give yourself up to such gloomy fancies, father," said Mabel in deep distress. "You make me unhappy."

"I am sorry to blight your happiness, but it will be only for a short time. I shall pass away,

and in the happiness of married life you will forget me."

"Oh, father, how can you talk so?" remonstrated Mabel in deep concern.

"I do not speak thus to reproach you," said Mr. Parkhurst in the tone of a martyr. It may be remarked that although he had declined to receive a biscuit when proffered by his daughter, he had helped himself, and in spite of his despondence was eating with apparent relish.

"I do not say this to reproach you," he proceeded. "I suppose it is only natural that the young should be wholly wrapped up in themselves and in their own plans, and so forget those who have passed before them on the stage of life. You are only like the rest. And perhaps it is as well. I have no desire to act as a kill-joy to your happiness, and though I am wretched myself, I have no disposition to interfere with your enjoyment of life."

"But how can I enjoy life when I see you so unhappy, father? Is there nothing I can do to restore you to cheerfulness?"

"There is but one thing," said her father, "and that is a thing which I shall not ask of you. If any sacrifice is to be made, it is best that I should make it. You have more years to live than I, and it is best that I should go to the grave rather than interfere with any of your plans."

This was setting the conduct of Mabel in an odious light, and under the cover of resignation really taxing her with selfishness and disregard of her father's happiness, while at the same time it undervalued the sacrifice which was demanded of her.

"Interfering with any of your plans," was certainly a mild way of expressing a marriage with one whom not only she did not love, but for whom she felt a positive repugnance.

"You mean that I can help you only by marrying Mr. Clarke," said Mabel with a troubled expression.

"That is the only way which will restore me to my former place in society, and so prolong my life," said Mr. Parkhurst. "But I am not so selfish as to require it at your hands. You would prefer to marry Henry Davenport, and I do not wish to influence your choice. To one at my age, a few years more or less of life make little difference, and I freely confess that if, as it appears likely, my life is to be spent in this wilderness, I should prefer to die. Life can have no charms for me. It will at least be a consolation to me"—this was said in his gloomiest manner—"to feel that my daughter has nothing to interfere with her happiness."

As Mr. Parkhurst said this, he supplied himself with his fourth biscuit, which he ate in a

resigned way as if he ate only because he felt that it was necessary to life.

All this was very trying to Mabel, who felt that all her father said was meant as a reproach to her—particularly his references to her happiness.

"Father," she said, "I feel very much troubled by your unhappiness, and am sorry that I cannot do the only thing which would relieve you, but I cannot marry Mr. Clarke. He is thoroughly odious to me—I feel a repugnance to him which I cannot account for."

"It is enough," said her father in a melancholy tone. "As I said I do not wish to interfere with your plans, and if you prefer Henry Davenport——"

"Prefer!" repeated Mabel. "That is not the word. It would imply that this man Clarke was any way tolerable."

"He is a lawyer in good standing," said her father severely. "Because you do not choose to marry him, you should not malign him."

Mabel was somewhat taken aback by this unexpected defense of the lawyer from her father's lips.

"At least you must admit his rascality in taking such an advantage of you as he is attempting to do."

"I am not clear about that," said Mr. Park-

hurst perversely. "All men are selfish—some more than others perhaps—but none are free from it. This man finds himself in possession of a secret which gives him the power of obtaining something he is anxious to obtain. I do not know that we ought to blame him for availing himself of this for his own advantage."

"But, father, is it not dishonest to withhold that which belongs to another?" asked Mabel in considerable astonishment. "Would a man of honor adopt such a method of forcing a compliance with his desires?"

"As to honesty, Mabel, you will remember that he might have taken the money and said nothing about it to any of us. It is clear to me that, whatever else may be said of him, he is not a mercenary man. No, he is evidently very much in love with you, and his love has led him to take advantage of this accidental discovery of the letter. No, I cannot permit you to speak of him unjustly, although it might be expected that I, upon whom his resolute persistence in standing by his conditions falls heaviest,—it might be expected that I should be most disposed to reproach him. But though he has wronged me, I will yet be just to him."

"You are altogether too indulgent in your opinion of him," said Mabel.

"When you have lived to my age," said her

father, "you will learn to look upon the world with different eyes. There is not so much difference between different people as you may be tempted to believe. We all have a root of selfishness in us that goes down deeper than you may suppose. I have no doubt that this young lover of yours, Harry Davenport, would act in the same way as Mr. Clarke if he were placed in similar circumstances."

"You cannot mean so, father," said Mabel with indignant emphasis. "Henry like this fellow Clarke! If I thought he would ever become so, I would never marry him!"

"I do not wish to lessen your confidence in him," said Mr. Parkhurst, who by the way desired nothing more. "It is well that we should shut our eyes to the imperfections of our friends. Ignorance is the only bliss."

Mabel was about to remonstrate with her father for holding such low views of human nature, when her attention was drawn to the figure of Henry Davenport, as he dashed into the yard on horseback. Feeling assured that something unusual brought him, and hoping that it might be to bring good tidings, she hastily rose from the table, and went to the door to admit him.

CHAPTER XXV

A CONSULTATION

THE joyful expression upon the face of Henry Davenport confirmed Mabel's anticipations.

Dismounting from his steed he hastened to her side, saying, "Well, Mabel, what do you think I have got?"

"Not the letter!" she exclaimed eagerly. "You cannot have got the letter!"

"What do you call that, then?" he asked triumphantly, displaying the yellow and crumpled paper that was to them of such immense importance.

"Where did you get it?" asked Mabel breathlessly.

"I bought it."

"Bought it?"

"Yes, and am to pay five hundred dollars for it."

"What can you mean, Henry?" asked the bewildered girl. "Surely the lawyer would not part with it for that sum?"

"No, and probably he knows nothing of its disposal. The purchase was made of Jerry."

"Of Jerry?"

"Yes. I see you are surprised, and I will no longer keep you in suspense. You must know, then, that as I was riding in the forest, I came upon our young hero apparently indulging in a fit of meditation. Accosting him, I inquired what occupied his thoughts, when he gradually led me on until he drew out our whole history, and ended by eliciting from me an offer of five hundred dollars for the missing letter, on which he at once produced the document and claimed the money. I feel so grateful to him for his thus removing the only impediment to our union that I shall faithfully keep my promise to him, and pay him the amount."

"I am more surprised than you. How did Jerry stumble upon such a valuable discovery?"

"He did not appear able to give much information upon that point. He had been hurrying along in the forest, and accidentally came upon a pocket-book containing papers, and among them this."

"Belonging of course to Mr. Clarke?"

"Yes, his name was upon it."

"Could he have dropped it?"

"Hardly, for it seemed to be empty, so far as money is concerned. The probability is that it was stolen from him, and the pocket-book and paper thrown away after the money had been

taken. But there is Mehitable coming to the house in a high state of excitement apparently. What can have happened?"

Mehitable, it will be remembered, was just from the woods where she had accomplished the deliverance of the lawyer. It was altogether too remarkable an adventure for her to keep to herself, and she accordingly rushed into the presence of her young mistress in a fever of excitement, intent upon telling all that had befallen her.

"What is the matter, Mehitable?" asked Mabel in some curiosity. "I judge from your manner that something remarkable has occurred."

"So there has, Miss Mabel. Something so surprising, and just to think that I should have been the means of declining him from his bonds."

"Him? Whom do you mean by him?" asked Henry Davenport with sudden interest, suspecting the truth.

"Why, Mr. Clarke, to be sure; the gentleman that is boarding to the tavern. Oh, he has such sweet, pretty manners!"

"You seem to be quite in love with him, Mehitable."

"Me!" simpered Mehitable. "How can you talk so, Miss Mabel! And to be sure, if I did, it would not be surprising, for he was so attentive. You can't think how polite and attentive he was.

But I don't know whether it would be best to change my situation in life. Men are so deceitful!"

"Mehitable, I protest against this wholesale aspersion upon the sex," said Henry Davenport with mock indignation and seeming great seriousness. "Fie upon you!"

"Perhaps I am wrong," said Mehitable, "but you know we girls have to be very circumspicious, don't we, Miss Mabel?"

"Certainly," responded Mabel, keeping her countenance with difficulty. "But you have not told us about Mr. Clarke. Did you say he was tied?"

"Yes, he was tied hand and foot, and was laid under a tree. You can't think how my heart bled for him, Miss Mabel. I was walking along as innocent as could be, when all at once I heard a voice. I was flustrated and going to run, till I knew who it was. He asked me to untie the cords for him, and you can't think how happy it made me feel to think it was I that came along just as I did. It would have been so dreadful if he had been obliged to stay there all night, and he might have caught cold, too."

Mabel and Henry Davenport exchanged a smile as they saw how deeply Mehitable had become interested in the lawyer.

"I suppose," said the young man jocosely,

"that he repaid you with a kiss when you had succeeded in freeing him from his uncomfortable position."

Poor Mehitable! Her pride led her to think of using an evasion which might lead her auditors to imagine that she was admired by the object of her own admiration.

"If he did, I couldn't help it," she said modestly.

Young Davenport at first looked surprised, and then, as he fathomed the spinster's motive, amused, but out of consideration for her feelings he did not display any incredulity, though the lean, sallow, and wrinkled face of Mehitable certainly would warrant a doubt of her powers of fascination.

"How came Mr. Clarke in such a situation?" asked Mabel.

"It was all along of that wretch, Indian John," said Mehitable. She added with energy, "If I could get hold of him, I would scratch him."

"But what object could he have in binding Mr. Clarke? Did he have any grudge against him?"

"It warn't that. It was because he was a thief. He wanted Mr. Clarke's money."

Here Mabel and Henry Davenport exchanged a look of intelligence. By questioning they obtained from Mehitable all the additional informa-

tion of which she was possessed. This, however, proved to be but slight.

A consultation was then held as to what was best to be done.

Of course it occurred to them that the lawyer, finding his pocket-book gone, with its valuable papers missing, would feel uneasy, and might be tempted to return to New York immediately, and possess himself of the treasure before anyone else could make use of the information to be obtained from the paper.

This was by all means to be avoided. It would, therefore, be advisable to ease his mind by holding out some inducements of a disposition to yield to his solicitations and agree to a marriage, accompanied by the desire of more time for consideration.

It was decided not to communicate the discovery to Mr. Parkhurst, lest by his changed manner he should awake the lawyer's suspicions. Furthermore it was arranged that Henry Davenport should at once proceed to New York, and as quietly as possible remove the treasure to some other place, after which he would return and the marriage would take place.

This would probably occupy a fortnight, as in that day the means of communication between different parts of the country were in their infancy compared with the present day, and the

distance of three hundred miles between them and New York could not well be traversed in much less than a week.

This arrangement was on many accounts decided to be the best that could be fixed upon, and Henry Davenport agreed to start for the city inside of two days. Meanwhile Mabel was to keep the lawyer in tow until it should no longer be necessary to fear him, and enjoin Jerry to say nothing whatever of what had occurred.

On the very next day Dick Clarke rode over to the Parkhursts' place. Although he was well satisfied that the papers had been destroyed by the Indian, the bare possibility that the most valuable one might have been preserved made him feel somewhat uneasy, and he therefore wished to know how his prospects stood with Mabel.

To his gratified surprise she received him more gently than he had hoped. She told him frankly that her affections were set upon another, and that it would be painful for her to part from him; yet that in a matter where her father's happiness seemed so much involved she was not willing to decide hastily. She therefore begged him to allow her a fortnight to make up her mind.

Nothing in her manner excited the lawyer's suspicions, and he left the house with a happy confidence that the campaign would close in fourteen days with the happiest results to him.

CHAPTER XXVI

JERRY RECEIVES A LETTER

In those days the post-office service was very primitive. Letters came to the neighborhood about once a month and were usually left at Hill's Tavern to be called for. The receiver had to pay to get his letter, and often the charge was one or two shillings.

On the morning following the consultation between Mabel and Henry Davenport, Jerry was sent to the tavern to see if any letters had arrived.

"Mind you bring me a nice one," said Mehitable to the boy.

"If it's a dollar shall I pay for it, Hitty?"

"Mercy on me! No, indeed, Jerry Blue. A letter ought not to be over a shilling."

"But supposing it contains an offer of marriage? Some men, you know, would rather write a proposal than make one face to face."

"What do you know about proposals?" demanded the spinster.

"Oh, I know some men are as bashful as some ladies. Now I think Mr. Clarke is a real bashful man."

Jerry said this sarcastically, but Mehitable took it in dead earnest.

"Do you really?" she simpered.

"Why, to be sure. He's the most bashful man I ever set eyes on."

"Isn't it strange, I thought so myself, Jerry." The spinster was thinking of the scene in the woods and what Henry Davenport had said about being kissed. "Well—ahem—you bring my letter, if there is one."

"And pay the dollar?" demanded Jerry teasingly.

"It won't be a dollar. It hadn't ought to be more than a shilling."

"But if it is half a dollar, or two shillings?" insisted the mischievous boy.

"Well, you can pay half a dollar, but it's an awful price," was the slow answer, and then Jerry started off, for the squire had told him to come back promptly.

As Jerry was on the way to Hill's Tavern he came up to Dick Clarke, who was out on another hunt for the missing document of importance.

"Hullo, boy!" sang out the lawyer, in a by no means pleasant tone of voice.

"Hullo yourself!" returned Jerry. He did not feel like being polite to one who had caused trouble for his master and his young mistress.

Dick Clarke looked at the boy sharply.

"You're a very nice boy," he remarked coldly.

"Thank you," answered Jerry.

"Don't they teach you any manners at the Parkhursts'?"

"All the manners I want."

"My, but you *are* impudent!" cried Dick Clarke. "It seems to me you ought to have a dressing down."

"If I do need dressing down, you'll not be the one to give it to me," went on Jerry, as independently as ever.

Now it happened that Clarke was in a particularly bad humor, and in a twinkle he caught Jerry by the collar.

"I'll teach you to talk respectfully to your betters," he cried, shaking the boy roughly.

"Let go of me!" roared Jerry. "Let go, or I'll hit you!"

"I'll let go after you promise to behave yourself."

"I won't promise anything," panted Jerry, and gave the lawyer a sudden push in the stomach that sent him sprawling on his back. The hold was broken, and Jerry leaped back to a safe distance.

"Hi! hi! you rascal!" puffed Dick Clarke, as he turned over and got up. "I'll warm you good for that!" And he shook his fist at Jerry.

"You will—if you can catch me," answered the boy, keeping at a safe distance.

"What do you mean by knocking me down?"

"What do you mean by shaking me?"

"You deserved the shaking."

"Then you deserved to be knocked down."

"You young villain!"

"You old villain!"

Here both stopped to glare at each other. Dick Clarke was boiling with rage, while Jerry felt like doubling up with laughter.

"If I was Squire Parkhurst, I wouldn't have you in my house a minute," continued the lawyer, not knowing what else to say.

"I you were the squire, I wouldn't stay with you a minute."

"What put you on a high horse, anyway?"

"I am not on a high horse—I'm on foot," and Jerry grinned.

Again Dick Clarke made a dash for the lad. But Jerry was too nimble for him and easily kept out of his reach.

"Just you wait till I catch you!" called out the lawyer.

"If you touch me again, I'll complain to the squire."

"Indeed!"

"And I'll complain to Miss Mabel, too."

At this Dick Clarke's face changed color.

"See here, Jerry, I want to talk to you," he said, after a pause.

"All right, fire away," said the boy, but kept at a safe distance."

"Come closer. I don't want to yell like a bull."

"Thanks, but I didn't know bulls yelled. They generally bellow around here."

"You know what I mean. Do you think a good deal of Miss Mabel?"

"To be sure I do."

"That young Davenport comes to see her pretty often, doesn't he?"

"You had better ask her that question. It's none of my business. And now I've got to be off," continued Jerry, and went on his way, whistling a favorite air at the top of his wind power.

"A curious boy," murmured the lawyer, gazing after him. "How I would like to give him a dressing down!"

The encounter with the lawyer did not diminish Jerry's high spirits in the least, and his arrival at Hill's Tavern found him still whistling merrily.

"Well, Jerry, what brings you?" demanded the landlord, knowing full well that the boy did not want a drink of liquor.

"I want to know if there are any letters for the folks at our place, Mr. Hill."

"Yes, there are," was the answer. "Two for the squire and one for yourself."

"A letter for me!" gasped Jerry, fearing he had not heard aright. "Did you say for me, Mr. Hill?"

"Certainly I did. Anything so very strange about that?"

"Why, I never got a letter in my life."

"Well, it's for you sure, for it's addressed to Master Jeremiah Blue, in care of Joseph Parkhurst, Esquire."

"Yes, it must be for me. Where is it from?"

"You'll find that out when you read it. There's two shillings to be paid, and four shillings for the squire's two letters besides."

"Here's the squire's money, Mr. Hill. And here is a dollar to take out what I owe you."

"Hullo, you're rich, Jerry. Did the squire give you the dollar?"

"No, I got that from Mr. Davenport."

"He must have more than he wants, to give you a dollar."

"I'm going to get more from him some day," was the mysterious reply. "But hand over my letter. I am anxious to see what it has got to say."

The letters were produced and settled for, and Jerry thrust those belonging to Joseph Parkhurst

into his breast pocket. Then he gazed keenly at the epistle directed to himself.

It was post-marked New York, and had been sent from the city nearly ten days before. Tearing it open, he read as follows:

"MASTER JEREMIAH BLUE,

"*My Dear Young Friend:* You will perhaps be surprised to hear from me so speedily, but the fact of the matter is, I feel under heavy obligations to you for the service done me, and I have lost no time in taking up the matter of your parentage, with a view to solving the mystery, if possible.

"I have found out several things of great importance and I think the mystery can be solved, if you will come at once to New York and bring with you the blue overcoat that was wrapped around you at the time you were left at the poor-house, and also the slip of paper that was pinned to the overcoat.

"I am willing to pay all the expenses of your trip to this city and I hereby authorize you to call on my friend Major Davenport of your settlement for a loan of fifty dollars, which I will repay as soon as I can safely send the money. You can show him this letter as your authority for calling for the loan.

"Do not delay in the matter, as every day is of

importance. A certain person I wish you to meet wants to sail for England inside of the next month.

"Your obedient servant and well wisher,

"HENRY MAXWELL."

CHAPTER XXVII

A TRIP TO NEW YORK

JERRY could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses as he perused the letter sent to him by Mr. Henry Maxwell.

"Can this be true?" he asked himself. "Am I at last to find out who I really am? Oh, if only it is true!"

"You seem to be mightily interested, Jerry," observed the landlord curiously.

"I am," was the answer.

"From some friend in New York, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"And good news?"

"Very, Mr. Hill. But I can't stop to tell you about it now. I've got to get home," and without saying more the boy hurried from the tavern.

He felt as if he was treading on air. The trip to New York was enough to elate him. But what if he should find his parents, and what if they should be rich!

"I wish I could fly to New York," he muttered. "Somehow, it seems to me I won't be able to get there quick enough. So Mr. Maxwell is a

friend to Henry Davenport's father, the major. I ought not to have any trouble getting that loan. Not but what I reckon the squire or Miss Mabel would let me have it, if I asked them."

He was almost home when he saw Henry Davenport coming toward him on horseback.

"Well, Jerry, off on an errand?" said the young man pleasantly.

"Yes, Mr. Davenport. By the way, is your father home these days?" went on Jerry.

"He is. But why do you ask?" questioned Henry Davenport, coming to a halt.

"I may want to make a loan from him of fifty dollars."

"Indeed! That is rather out of the ordinary, Jerry."

"It's on account of this letter. Do you know Mr. Henry Maxwell of New York?"

"Quite well."

"I met him in the woods some time ago and stopped his runaway horse for him. He asked me about myself and promised to try to find out something about me. This morning I got this letter."

Henry Davenport read the communication with much interest.

"I must congratulate you on your good fortune, Jerry!" he said warmly. "I trust you will be pleased with what is in store for you."

"Thank you. I wonder if I can't start for New York this afternoon."

"Better wait until to-morrow morning and then we can go together. It will be better for you to go with me than to go alone."

"Oh, Mr. Davenport, just the thing!" cried Jerry enthusiastically. "When are you going to start?"

"Directly after breakfast. I shall ride on one of our best horses and you can have his companion, if you wish."

At this Jerry fairly danced a jig.

"You're the best fellow I know of!" he ejaculated enthusiastically. "You're five hundred times better than that Richard Clarke."

"You are evidently down on that man, Jerry—and I don't blame you. Have you seen him to-day?"

"Yes, he tried to bully me about an hour ago."

"What did you do?"

"Gave him as good as he sent. I hope, after you have found that treasure, that you send him about his business."

"We'll certainly do that," answered Henry Davenport.

When Jerry reached home he took the letters to Squire Parkhurst and then told both the squire and Mabel about the communication from Mr. Maxwell.

"Jerry, I sincerely hope the news proves good," said Mabel. "But let me warn you not to raise your hopes too high. Mr. Maxwell may be mistaken."

"We tried our best to learn something years ago," said Joseph Parkhurst. "But it was a dismal failure."

"You have no objection to my going to New York, have you?"

"None whatever, my lad. And you need not go to Major Davenport for a loan. I owe you something for your services to me, and will give you what you need." And so it was arranged.

Nine o'clock of the following morning found Jerry on his way to meet Henry Davenport. In a bundle he carried the blue overcoat, and in his pocket was the precious slip of paper which had been pinned to the garment.

The boy was in a hopeful spirit, and it must be confessed that Henry Davenport was equally happy.

"May we both be successful in our missions," said the young man, as they started off together.

To give all the particulars of that journey to New York City would occupy more pages that I care to devote to that portion of our story. Suffice it to say then that the journey lasted seven days, two half days being spent indoors while it

rained too heavily to move ahead on horseback. Every night they stopped at some settlement or town, and at these places Henry Davenport attended to it that they got the best of accommodations. Only once did they get on the wrong road and this took them but six miles out of their correct course. On the way they saw many rabbits and foxes, and once caught sight of a small deer, but nothing in the shape of a wild animal came to harm them.

"The hunters have done their worst throughout this section," said Henry Davenport. "All the big game have moved to the westward."

It had been so long since Jerry had seen New York that he gazed around him with considerable curiosity when they reached the city. They came in late at night and the boy was perfectly willing to take a rest before calling upon Henry Maxwell, although as anxious as ever to hear what the merchant might have to tell him.

They put up at a well-known hostelry of those times, and never had Jerry feasted upon a better dinner than Henry Davenport ordered for both.

"This gets me," he said, as he was satisfying his hunger. "It's more than I expected."

"I've got to do what's right," answered Henry Davenport, with a twinkle in his eye. "For all I know, I may be entertaining an English prince in disguise."

"Do you mean by that that I may be an English prince?" demanded Jerry.

"Of course."

"Well, I don't want to be. I'd rather be a plain citizen of these United States."

"Patriotically spoken, Jerry. But I am afraid you'll have to take what comes."

Jerry slept well, but was up at sunrise, and a little later presented himself at the house where Henry Maxwell lived.

"Is Mr. Maxwell home?" he asked of the servant who answered his use of the knocker.

"He is not," was the answer. "He went away on business and won't be home until to-morrow. Do you want to leave any word for him?"

"No," answered Jerry, somewhat disappointed. "I will call again to-morrow."

"Will you leave your name?"

"Jerry Blue. Mr. Maxwell wrote me to come and see him."

"Yes, so he said. He told me to tell you he would be home by noon to-morrow, if you came."

"All right then, I'll be back at noon sharp," said the boy.

There was nothing for him to do but to wait, and thinking he might assist Henry Davenport in the search for the Parkhurst treasure he hurried back to where he had left the young man.

"Why, yes, Jerry, you can go along to old Aunt Phœbe's house, if you wish," said Henry Davenport. "There may be quite some digging to do and you can help at that."

"It will just suit me," said the boy.

CHAPTER XXVIII

UNEARTHING THE TREASURE

THE little cottage occupied by Black Phœbe was situated at the extreme upper end of Manhattan Island, so far above the then line of settlement that its value was regarded as merely nominal. It belonged to the Parkhurst estate, but the old family nurse had occupied it free of rent for years. On the land surrounding the cottage the aged colored woman raised a few vegetables. She also did such odd jobs as were offered to her, but she was getting too old to do a great deal.

When Henry Davenport rode up, accompanied by Jerry, the old woman was at work just behind the house, hoeing potatoes. She was still vigorous, although she could not have been less than eighty years of age. Although it was midsummer, she wore a dress padded like a comforter of the present day. On her head she wore a white cloth that had been twisted into the form of a turban.

She looked up with curiosity, leaning on her hoe meanwhile, as the young man dismounted

from his horse and springing lightly over the fence, advanced towards her.

"How do you do this morning, Phœbe?" said Henry Davenport by way of salutation.

"Pretty comfortable," said the colored lady in a distant tone, scanning the young man's face critically. "I don't know you."

"But I hope you will, Aunt Phœbe, from this time forth. Who do you suppose has sent you a message by me?"

Phœbe shook her head.

"Then you can't tell?"

"There *ain't* nobody that would take the trouble to send a message to old Phœbe, except it may be that blessed child Mabel, and she's gone away off into the woods among the wild Indians. Oh, me! it seems sometimes as if I couldn't go to the everlasting kingdom without seeing that ar blessed child once again."

"I saw her only three or four days since, Aunt Phœbe," said the young man.

"You saw the dear child Mabel?" asked Phœbe, dropping her hoe in joyful surprise. "And did she send any message to her Aunty Phœbe?"

"She sent her love to Aunt Phœbe, and thinks she shall come and see her before long."

"Bless her dear heart! It will be a joyful day for old Phœbe. And when will she come?"

"As soon as she is married, Aunt Phœbe," said Henry Davenport with a smile.

"Married!" exclaimed Aunt Phœbe, holding up both hands in astonishment. "That baby going to be married!"

"But she isn't a baby now, Aunt Phœbe! She's a grown-up young lady!"

"She'll always be a baby to me," said the old nurse. "Don't I remember how often I have carried the dear child in these arms, and pillowed her head on my bosom? Oh, law! those were happy times. It don't seem as if she could be old enough to be married. And who is going to marry the dear baby?"

"It is a young man named Davenport."

"It's a good name," said Phœbe. "I know'd a Davenport family once, but they went back to England. And is this young man a good young man, and will he be kind to the dear child?"

"That he will, I am sure, Aunt Phœbe. He loves her very much."

"I am glad of that. And how does he look? Is he handsome?"

"Why, as to that, Aunt Phœbe, I'll leave you to judge for yourself," said the young man, blushing.

"Are you the one that is to marry Mabel?" said the old woman earnestly.

"Yes, Aunt Phœbe."

Phœbe came forward, and resting her hands, hard and shriveled by age and toil, upon the young man's shoulder, looked long and earnestly in his face. She was striving to discern by the outward expression the soul that lay behind, and to judge whether he was worthy of her pet child. It was touching to see the anxious concern of the old nurse for the welfare of her favorite—the affection, which nothing could abate, which drew her to the child that had nestled in her bosom.

The scrutiny, which was a long one, apparently resulted favorably, for Phœbe, drawing a long breath of relief, said, "I know you will be kind and loving to the dear child. There's something in your face that tells me so. And will you sometimes bring her to see old Phœbe?"

"That I will, Aunt Phœbe. Probably, before a month is over, we shall come to New York for a short time, and perhaps Mr. Parkhurst will come here to live. But that will depend upon circumstances that I am about to tell you. Knowing your interest in the family I am about to tell you a secret, Aunt Phœbe."

Nothing could have pleased Aunt Phœbe better than this promise, not alone because she possessed a fair share of that curiosity that is said to be a characteristic trait of her sex, but also because she was proud of the confidence which such a disclosure evinced.

It is unnecessary to follow Henry Davenport in his relation of the circumstances under which the treasure was concealed. It will be remembered that in the letter of the late Mr. Parkhurst it was stated that the money had been buried in the temporary absence of Phœbe, to whom it had been thought wisest not to divulge it, not from any doubts as to her fidelity, but because it would have been no good to make the disclosure. Now, however, Henry Davenport thought best to make a confidante of her, because any other course would have been beset by embarrassments, and Phœbe might be of essential service to him in assisting him to unearth the treasure and conceal it in her cottage until it could be disposed of in some other way.

It may well be imagined that Phœbe listened to the story with the greatest wonder, and interrupted the speaker several times by ejaculations expressive of surprise.

"Under dat ar apple tree!" she exclaimed. "And to think I've been here so many years, and never thought that there was so much treasure just under my feet. Oh, law! what a strange world it is, anyhow!"

But when in the course of the narrative young Davenport came to speak of the manner in which Mr. Clarke, the lawyer, attempted to serve his own interest her indignation became intense.

"He wanted to marry my baby?" she exclaimed in scorn. "He ain't good enough to marry old Phœbe, much less that dear blessed angel, Mabel. Oh I wish he'd come here; I only wish he'd come just once—dat's all I'd ask. I'd——"

Here Phœbe brandished her hoe, with an air of decided menace that told expressively enough what sort of a reception the lawyer would have been likely to receive at the hands of the faithful old nurse.

Henry Davenport smiled at her enthusiasm, while he shared in her feelings toward the lawyer.

Jerry was introduced, and it was determined at once to proceed to dig for the treasure. As there were no houses near by, and it was not in sight from the road, this step was not considered imprudent. Stripping off his coat Henry Davenport proceeded to dig with energy, followed by Jerry. At length Jerry's spade struck a hard substance.

"Dat's it!" exclaimed Phœbe, clasping her arms. "Oh, for de love of Heaven, child, work as quick as you can."

Finding they were on the track, Henry Davenport and Jerry began to dig with greater energy than before, and at length revealed the top of a chest very strongly resembling those now used by sailors. Digging around it they discovered

that it was bound up in heavy ropes, many of which had long since gone to decay.

"Let us try to lift the box out," said the young man in a slightly strained voice.

He was now tremendously excited, and so was Jerry. Using a spade and a block of wood, they pried up one end of the box and at last brought it up to the surface.

"Hadn't we better take it into the cottage?" suggested Jerry. "Somebody may come here while we are opening it."

"Yes, we'll take it in," said Henry Davenport.

"Has yo' got a key fo' dat box?" demanded Black Phœbe.

"I have not; but it is much rotted, and I think it will break open with ease."

It was a heavy load to shift to the main room of the cottage. But neither the young man nor Jerry thought of the labor involved. To get the box open was their one thought.

At last it was in the cottage, and Black Phœbe shut the door and fastened it. Then, with a spade, Henry Davenport knocked off the top of the chest.

There, beneath the cover, lay a pile of gold, dim and dirty from age, but still sovereign gold, as all could plainly see.

The Parkhurst treasure was found at last.

"It's all there!" cried Jerry. "Oh, what a

pile! The squire will be rich as long as he lives."

"Dat beats anyt'ing I eber see," ejaculated Black Phœbe. "An' to t'ink dat I was a-libin' heah all de time an' didn't know it!" And she shook her old head in wonder.

"I just guess Richard Clarke will be pretty mad when he hears how we have outwitted him," said Jerry. "What are you going to do with the gold, now you have found it?"

"Put it in a safe place, Jerry, and without delay," answered Henry Davenport.

While Jerry remained behind to help Black Phœbe guard the treasure Henry Davenport went off to buy a new box and hire a horse and cart to take the treasure away.

All the gold was safely stored in the new box, which was locked and sealed by the young man. Then the box was placed in the cart and taken away to the vault of a merchant with whom the Davenports and the Parkhursts were in the habit of doing business.

"I suppose you want to get right back to tell the good news," said Jerry that evening, when the work was over.

"No Jerry. You helped me and now I am going to try to help you," answered Henry Davenport. "I shall wait and see what comes of this interview with Mr. Maxwell."

CHAPTER XXIX

AN OLD MYSTERY CLEARED UP

My young readers will well understand that Jerry was very anxious to see Mr. Henry Maxwell on the following day.

Half an hour before noon the boy and Henry Davenport set out for the home of the rich merchant.

"Let me caution you not to have too high hopes, Jerry," said the young man, for at least the tenth time. "After all, Mr. Maxwell may have made a mistake, or the news may not be as good as you anticipate."

To this Jerry did not answer. His heart was too full for speech.

When they reached the merchant's house they were invited into the parlor, and in a few minutes Henry Maxwell joined them.

"I am very glad to see you," he said, as he shook hands. "And also glad to see you, Mr. Davenport."

"I came just as soon as I could, Mr. Maxwell," said Jerry. "I am more than anxious to hear about what you have found out."

"Did you bring the overcoat and the slip of paper with you, Jerry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, then. I presume they are in that bundle under your arm."

"The blue overcoat is, sir. The slip of paper is in my pocket."

"Will you let me see the paper?"

"Certainly, sir."

Jerry produced the slip and Henry Maxwell scanned it closely for a minute.

"It certainly looks like the same writing," he murmured to himself.

"Like what writing?" demanded Jerry, catching the words.

"Never mind now, Jerry. I wish you would come with me. I want you to pay a visit to an old woman who may know a good deal about your past. She was going to sail for Europe, but I have managed to detain her in New York."

"Shall I go along?" questioned Henry Davenport. "I take a great interest in Jerry. He has just done the Parkhursts, and incidentally myself, a great service."

"Go, by all means, Mr. Davenport," was the answer.

The merchant called for his coach, and soon it came around to the front door and all three entered. It was a handsome affair, with soft

cushions, and much better than Jerry had ever before occupied.

"This is what it is to be rich," thought the boy. "No wonder the squire sighs for the old times after being used to these things for years."

After riding in the coach for a good half-hour the equipage came to a standstill before a row of buildings that were in a highly dilapidated condition.

"We will alight here," said Henry Maxwell. "Follow me," and he led the way into the hallway of one of the houses. He passed up two flights of stairs and knocked loudly on a door in the rear.

"Come in," said a somewhat hoarse voice, and the three entered.

The room was dirty in the extreme and contained furniture that had long ago seen its best days. There was one small window, which was open to admit the fresh air, and before this, in a rocker, sat an old woman, with whitish hair and wrinkled features. On the table was a can that had contained ale, and it was plainly to be seen that the woman was a hard drinker and had been for many years.

"So it's you, Mr. Maxwell," said the woman, in her rough voice. "I've been looking for you these three days."

"I had to go away on business," answered the

merchant. He turned to Jerry. "Jerry, this is Mrs. Starfield. Mrs. Starfield, this is the boy I mentioned to you."

The woman turned to Jerry and gave him a sharp look. Then came a gasp and she held up her hands in astonishment.

"It is Maurice Robertson! It is Maurice Robertson come to life again!" she panted.

"You are sure of this?" demanded Mr. Maxwell.

"Yes, yes! Why, sir, he is the dead image of his father! If you do not believe it, look at the portrait of Maurice Robertson which you will find in the old Robertson home in Concord."

"What is this you are saying?" asked Jerry. "Who was Maurice Robertson?"

"He was your father," answered the woman.

"My father?"

"Yes, and you look exactly like him."

"Hold, not so fast," interrupted Henry Maxwell. "Let us make certain first." He brought forth the blue overcoat. "Do you recognize this, Mrs. Starfield?"

"I do, sir. It is the very same that my husband wore on the day the child was stolen."

"And now this slip of paper." The merchant passed it over. "Look at it well, and let me know if you are prepared to swear that it is your handwriting."

Mrs. Starfield took the paper and held it to the light.

"Yes, I wrote that. I am sure of it."

Without replying, the merchant passed over a blank piece of paper and a pencil.

"Write that same line on this," he ordered.

In a somewhat agitated manner the woman complied. Then the two slips of paper were compared.

"It is certainly the same hand," said Henry Davenport. "She trembles a little now, but the formation of the letters is exactly the same, and so is that flourish on the capitals, Mr. Maxwell."

"You are right," replied Mr. Maxwell.

"But what does all this mean, Mr. Maxwell?" demanded Jerry. "Tell me who I am, won't you?"

"I will, but first I will have to tell you a little story," answered the merchant. "This woman here and her husband were once in the employ of a merchant who lived at Concord, Massachusetts, and did business in Boston. This merchant had one son, a little fellow christened Jeremiah. The woman was, so far as I am able to learn, a faithful servant, but the husband was a man of low degree and one very fond of liquor.

"The merchant owned some property in New York and wanted to sell the same. At about

that time he discharged his man servant for stealing. This servant concocted a scheme with a New York lawyer to swindle the merchant out of his New York holdings. But the merchant got wind of the plan, and both the servant and rascally lawyer had to leave the city in a hurry.

"The servant was much enraged over his failure to swindle his former employer, and under threats compelled his wife to steal the little boy Jeremiah and bring him to a small settlement on Long Island. Here the good-for-nothing husband and the rascally lawyer laid a plot to make the merchant pay dearly for the return of his child. But the authorities got wind of the affair and the evil-doers had to flee once more. Then the husband of the woman went on a long spree and tried to kill the little boy, but the woman took the child, wrapped it up in this blue overcoat, and left it at the door of the poorhouse. Shortly after that the woman got employment with a family of Philadelphia and went to that city, and the good-for-nothing husband lost his life by falling off the Battery into the water and being drowned."

"Amos would not have been so bad if it hadn't been for that rascally lawyer," sighed Mrs. Starfield. "He was led on, Amos was."

"More than likely," answered Henry Maxwell.

"Do you mean to say I am the son of that merchant of Boston?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, Jerry, there seems to be no question about it. Your real name is Jeremiah Robertson."

"Is my father living?"

"Yes, and your mother too, although both are now no longer young."

"Where are they?"

"Here, in New York."

"Will you take me to them?"

"Of course I will."

At that moment Mrs. Starfield set up something akin to a wail.

"What is to become of me?" she whined. "You said you would protect me if I confessed."

"I will do what I can for you," answered Henry Maxwell.

A little later found Jerry, the merchant, and Henry Davenport on their way to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Robertson. The boy felt as if he was in a dream, and pinched himself to see if he was really awake.

Soon the coach stopped in front of a fine mansion and Mr. Maxwell went ahead and rang the bell. They were ushered into a parlor and a fine gentleman came to meet them.

"This is Mr. Maurice Robertson?" questioned Mr. Maxwell.

"That is my name, sir," was the answer. "What can I do for you?"

There was an awkward pause, broken by Jerry who stepped forward.

"Mr. Robertson, I am looking for my father," he said bluntly.

"Yo—your father?" faltered the other.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Maxwell thinks that you are my father, and a certain Mrs. Starfield, who was once your servant, thinks the same. She says I was stolen from home when I was a baby."

Maurice Robertson drew a quick breath and gazed at Jerry as if stunned.

"Can it be true!" he murmured. "After all these long years!"

"I think it is true," put in Henry Maxwell. "Let me tell you the whole story," and in as few words as possible he did so.

"You will wonder how I got on the track of this mystery," he said. "Jerry had done me a good turn and I resolved to aid him all I could. I engaged one of the smartest police officials in the country to look up the case. He followed up the trail of Mrs. Starfield through a friend down in New Jersey, who had met her two years since. Mrs. Starfield confessed, after I promised to do all I could to protect her from the law. She is old, and drink has almost finished her. Besides, I think she speaks the truth when she says that

that lawyer was to blame more than her husband, who appears to have been somewhat weak-minded."

"I believe you there," answered Maurice Robertson. "But this is truly wonderful."

"Jerry looks like you," put in Henry Davenport. "Look in the glass, and see."

The gentleman and the boy walked to the large mirror that the parlor contained and stood side by side before it. The resemblance was truly wonderful. Mouth, nose, chin, and eyes were the exact counterpart of each other. Maurice Robertson turned suddenly and caught Jerry in his arms.

"You are my son!" he cried. "My son, come back to me after so many years!" And the tears rolled down his cheeks.

Jerry was equally affected and it was several seconds before he could speak.

"Beats all!" he said, at last. "It's like one of them fairy tales Miss Mabel used to tell me. So I ain't Jerry Blue, but Jerry Robertson, and I ain't a backwoods boy at all, but I belong in the city. Say, I feel awful queer, I do!"

"You'll get used to it," laughed Mr. Maxwell.

CHAPTER XXX

A BACKWOODS BOY NO LONGER—CONCLUSION

A LITTLE later Mrs. Robertson came in and matters were explained to her. She was a sweet woman, and Jerry's heart went out to her the instant he saw her. She was equally pleased and hugged the boy over and over again, while the tears of joy flowed silently down her cheeks.

"You must tell me all about yourself," said she, and Jerry told his story, to which both his father and his mother listened with keen attention.

"I am glad that you have been brought up with such a fine family as the Parkhursts," said his father, and Mrs. Robertson said the same.

"I suppose I'll have to go back to them and explain matters," said Jerry. "I'll be rather sorry to leave them, too."

"Would you rather stay with them than come with us?" questioned his mother quickly.

"No, indeed," he said. "But what I was thinking of was, that they'll be sorry to have me leave them, Miss Mabel especially."

A long talk followed, and in the end Mr. Max-

well and Henry Davenport were invited to dine with the Robertsons, including Jerry.

"What shall you do about Mrs. Starfield?" asked Mr. Maxwell, while they were gathered around the table. "She is almost at the end of her course and wants to go to England, to some of her relatives."

"Let her go," answered Mr. Robertson, and so it was settled.

But all were anxious to hear the details of the old servant's tale, and in the end Mrs. Starfield was made to visit the Robertson house.

"The lawyer was to blame," she said, over and over again. "He said it would be an easy way to make big money, and poor Amos believed everything he said."

"What was the lawyer's name?" asked Jerry.

"His name was Jason Gilroy," answered his father.

"What became of him?"

"That is a question. I think he fled to England."

"He did, but he came back about eight years ago," answered Mrs. Starfield. "He changed his name and cut off his beard, so that folks wouldn't know him."

"Do you know what name he now uses?" asked Mr. Maxwell.

"Yes, sir—Richard Clarke."

"Richard Clarke!" ejaculated Jerry and Henry Davenport in a breath.

"Do you know the man?" demanded Mr. Robertson.

"Do we know him?" repeated Jerry. "I just guess we do. He's the rascal who wanted to marry Miss Mabel Parkhurst and wanted to get hold of the hidden treasure."

"Is it possible!"

"I reckon we have a rod in pickle for Mr. Richard Clarke," came grimly from Henry Davenport. "After we get through with him he won't want to show his head again, either around our settlement or around New York."

"He ought to be arrested," came from Jerry.

"He shall be," answered his father quickly.

That very night it was arranged that Mr. Robertson should accompany Jerry and Henry Davenport back to the Parkhurst home. Jerry thanked Mr. Maxwell warmly for what the merchant had done, and Mr. Robertson was equally grateful.

And now, leaving the others on their journey to the settlement near Hill's Tavern, we will go back to the Parkhurst family and see how matters were faring there.

Mr. Parkhurst, unaware of the favorable change that had taken place in his circumstances,

THE GENTLEMAN AND THE BOY WALKED TO THE LARGE MIRROR THAT THE PARLOR CONTAINED AND STOOD SIDE BY SIDE BEFORE IT.—P. 239.

was still nervous and irritable. Mabel, sustained by hope, bore all with unruffled serenity. As for Dick Clarke, he felt that matters were approaching a crisis. The gold that Indian John had stolen from him constituted the bulk of what he had on hand, so that by the end of a fortnight he would have barely enough left to carry him back to the city. But he did not suffer this to trouble him much, feeling assured that Mabel would finally yield. Knowing very well that this would not be from any preference for him personally, he thought it wisest to keep out of her way, and employed his time in hunting and fishing.

At length the fortnight expired.

With a heart elate with hope Clarke rode over to the residence of his prospective father-in-law. When he was admitted into the sitting room, Mabel and her father were present. Dick Clarke advanced into the room with an air of easy indifference and affability, and bade Mabel and her father good-morning.

"I'm a man of business, Mr. Parkhurst," he said, rubbing his hands, "and once again let me hope that you and your charming daughter have considered favorably the proposal I have made, and are prepared to accept it."

"In that case," said Mabel, "you are prepared of course to give up to my father the letter of which you came into possession?"

The lawyer looked slightly embarrassed.

"I haven't it with me just at this moment," he said.

"Doubtless you have it at the tavern, then. You must pardon us for being over-careful, but the circumstances seem to justify it."

The lawyer paused a moment in embarrassment.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I didn't bring the letter with me on this journey. I thought there would be considerable risk of losing it, and accordingly left it in New York, at my office."

"How are we to know that you have such a letter, then?" asked Mr. Parkhurst.

"On my word of honor as a gentleman," commenced the lawyer.

"I am sorry you esteem your word so lightly," said Mabel coolly.

As she spoke she took from the table the letter that Clarke at once recognized as the one which he had lost.

"Confusion!" he muttered, while his heart sank within him.

"You undoubtedly recognize the letter," said Mabel.

"Where did you get it?" demanded Dick Clarke briefly.

"Well, if you must know, our boy Jerry found it in the woods nearly three weeks ago."

"Humph! Of course he brought it to you at once?"

"He did."

"And have you—ahem—have you done anything in the matter?"

"I do not consider that that is any of your business, Mr. Clarke, but since you want to know so much, I will answer that we have."

"You—er——"

"Mr. Davenport and Jerry went to New York together over a fortnight since."

The lawyer fell back in amazement.

"And they—you have heard from them?" he faltered.

For reply the door to the next room opened and Henry Davenport and Jerry entered, for they had reached the place the night before.

"Yes, we are back, Mr. Clarke," said Henry Davenport. "And I am happy to say that the Parkhurst treasure is safe, and you will never be able to put your hand on a dollar of it."

It would be hard to realize Richard Clarke's feelings at that instant. He felt that he had played his game and lost utterly.

"I suppose there is no use of my staying here longer," he said, as steadily as he could, starting for the door.

"You can't go just yet!" cried Jerry and caught him by the arm.

"What do you want, boy? Let me go."

"I shan't do it. I've got a score to settle with you, and don't you forget it."

"A score to settle. What do you mean?"

"I mean to tell you that you are found out, Mr. Richard Clarke, or whatever your real name is. Father, will you come in?"

Again the door to the other room opened, and Mr. Maurice Robertson walked in and faced the lawyer.

At the unexpected appearance of the merchant the lawyer's face grew deathly white, and he staggered as if about to fall.

"So you remember me, do you, Jason Gilroy?" demanded Jerry's father sternly.

"I—I—my name is not Gilroy," gasped the other, but he could scarcely frame the words.

"It is, and it is useless for you to deny it. You are Jason Gilroy, the man who plotted with the Starfields to rob me of my son, my baby boy Jerry, who stands beside me."

"Jerry—this boy is your son?"

"He is."

It was the last blow, and for the moment the lawyer was bereft of speech. Then he realized what this revelation meant to him—perhaps imprisonment for many years—and turned to leave the house. But again Jerry was too quick for him and sent him sprawling on the doorstep.

Henry Davenport also rushed in, and soon the lawyer was a prisoner.

"And serves him good and right!" came from Mehitable, who had been listening to all that was said. "Just to think what a smooth talker he was!" And then she added to herself: "And to think I might have married him if he had popped the question! After this I won't marry nobody!" And she never did get married.

A few words more, and we will draw our tale to a conclusion.

Much against his will, the rascally lawyer was made a close prisoner and taken to New York. Here Mrs. Starfield and Mr. Robertson testified against him, and he was sentenced to ten years in prison at hard labor.

When Joseph Parkhurst read the letter left by his father, and especially that portion which spoke of keeping the family honor intact, he was heartily ashamed of the manner in which he had treated Mabel, and he told his daughter so.

"Never mind, father," said the girl. "Remember our troubles are all over now."

A little later Mabel was married to Henry Davenport, and for her wedding portion the girl received one-half of the treasure that had been found. The happy husband insisted on paying Jerry the five hundred dollars that had been

promised, and to this Mr. Parkhurst added another five hundred out of his own purse. The wedding was a grand affair and all of our friends, including Mehitable, were present.

Shortly after this wedding Mr. Parkhurst went back to New York to live. He repurchased his old home, and at his death left the property to Mabel and her husband, who used to spend part of their time in the country and the balance in the city. Mabel and Henry Davenport were very happy, and Mehitable lived with them until the day of her death.

It may interest some to learn what became of Indian John. The money taken from the lawyer caused the red man to leave that locality entirely, and he moved up to Lake Erie. During the following winter he went out in the woods during a howling snow-storm and some weeks later was found at the foot of a big tree, frozen to death.

Jerry returned to New York with his newly found father, and after the general excitement was over the boy was sent to school, that he might receive a thorough education. When his school days were over Henry Maxwell took him in, and a few years later Jerry, through his parent, was enabled to buy a half-interest in the concern. He worked hard and was highly successful; and here we will leave him.

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